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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

*THE MODERN STUDENT'S LIBRARY*

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**POEMS AND PLAYS**

*By*

**ROBERT BROWNING**



*THE MODERN STUDENT'S LIBRARY*

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# POEMS AND PLAYS

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

SELECTED AND EDITED,  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK

CHICAGO

BOSTON

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1922

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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TO  
**WILLIAM LYON PHELPS**





## PREFATORY NOTE

This volume has been planned for the less experienced reader of Browning; the more advanced reader is satisfied only with the complete edition. The Introduction, therefore, aims merely to suggest briefly an approach to Browning, to point out such difficulties as often perplex one who reads Browning for the first time, and to state simply a few of the poet's fundamental ideas. Allusions in the text are annotated only where ignorance might come between the reader and the meaning of the poem; critical and interpretative notes have been omitted altogether, in the belief that most of the intellectual stimulus Browning has to offer is lost if the reader's thinking is done for him in advance. As accounts of Browning's life are easily accessible, it has seemed unnecessary to include any biographical material, but a brief reading list has been appended to the introduction.

H. E. J.

1900: Oct. 1900

and planned for the 1900 edition.  
The more advanced reading  
edition. The introduction  
to each part is written  
in such a way as to give  
a general idea of the  
subject and to show the  
relation of the  
part to the whole.  
The text is written in  
a simple, direct, and  
concise style, and is  
so arranged that the  
reader can follow the  
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The large capitals are the titles of the volumes in the complete edition of Browning.

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## INTRODUCTION

In his first published work, *Pauline*, written when he was only twenty, Browning stated his theory of poetry in the lines

And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one  
Who chronicled the stages of all life.

To this theory he held unwaveringly throughout his literary career of more than half a century, and can therefore be placed among the English poets who believed that the poet should be first of all an interpreter of life. And it is man's inner life, the life of his soul, how man thinks and feels, his ideas and emotions, the reasons for his actions rather than the actions themselves that interested Browning. He went so far as to say of man's soul: "Nothing else is worth study." To hold the mirror up to human nature and to show the relation of the individual soul to eternal truth was Browning's chief aim and all but constant practice.

Such a conception of the highest aim of poetry seems at first thought all inclusive and gives the poet an ideal utterly impossible of attainment. Taken literally, it is. No poet, even a Shakespeare, can hope to "chronicle the stages of all life." But it is characteristic of Browning that he defined his art, even in his youth, in terms of what soon became one of his strongest beliefs: that the ideal of any man, no matter what his particular work may be, must be unattainable, so that his life, be it short or long, may always be one of progress. Interpreted in the light of other conceptions of poetic art, Browning's conception seems even limited in its scope. It makes no mention of beauty, of rhythm, of any appeal to the senses or to the imagination, which for most readers are the essentials of poetry. It resulted in Browning's relegating to a place of secondary importance many of the qualities for which we ordinarily call poets great. As he said himself, it makes *strong* rather than *sweet* verse. Nevertheless, the statement, frequently made, that Browning was incapable of writing musically usually comes from those who do not really know him; and it can easily be disproved by many

passages and whole poems; but taken as a whole, his work is an attempt to interpret man's soul, beautiful or ugly, strong or weak, noble or base, and it is only occasionally that he puts primary importance upon anything else. To conclude that his best work is careless in composition, that he handled meter, stanza and rhyme indifferently, is to speak from only partial knowledge of his work. In variety of meter and stanza form few poets have surpassed him, and he is an acknowledged master of rhyme. But his technique is nearly always subordinate to his main purpose: to find the meaning of life through the soul of man.

From Browning's conception of poetry and his constant attempt to approximate his ideal arise two of the more serious difficulties which confront the inexperienced reader. (In attempting to live up to his theory Browning goes to every nook and corner of literature and history; and as he was one of the most widely read and scholarly of the English poets, the inexperienced reader often finds himself lacking in the background necessary to the enjoyment, if not to the actual understanding, of the poem in question.) Much of the difficulty of reading Browning's poems comes from his tacit assumption that the reader is as well informed about out of the way characters as he—and very few are. The long poem *Sordello*, one of the most difficult pieces of literature in any language, long a byword for obscurity even to the most erudite, owes its difficulty largely to the fact that Browning assumed that the reader could bring to the poem a knowledge sufficient to make *Sordello's* character and ideas comprehensible. Unfortunately not one reader in a million has such a background; it might almost be said that Browning alone was really prepared to read the poem. To a lesser degree the same assumption is made in many of the shorter and less difficult poems. Familiarity with little known as well as with famous characters is taken for granted; a knowledge of art, music, philosophy and literature, to mention but a few of the fields into which he goes, led by his desire to see the soul in all sorts of environments, may be brought with advantage to the reading of his greater poems. This is no reason, however, for looking upon Browning as a poet for the mature scholar alone. Many a reader, ambitious to extend his own cultural and intellectual horizon, has found, as one by-product of his reading, that the poetry of Browning



is an incentive to further study in many and varied fields of learning. He usually avoided subjects of merely local or contemporary interest; thoroughly English, he writes seldom of England; living enthusiastically and fully in his own age, with hosts of friends, he chooses his characters, as a rule, from the past. This emphasis on the fundamentals in human nature, which are not materially affected by place or time, makes possible a more lasting appeal than can be found in poetry limited in its scope by *here* and *now*. Further, the very fact that Browning does write of poets, painters, musicians, politicians, theologians, patriots—the list, if extended, would be surprisingly complete—offers something for readers differing widely in tastes and interests, and makes this poet of the so-called “narrow” Victorian era one whose appeal, so far as his subject matter is concerned, is all but universal. Genuine familiarity with Browning can result in a great extension of general information for the ambitious reader.

The second difficulty which the unwarned reader is almost certain to find in Browning comes from his use of a highly individual and rather unusual medium for portraying human nature, namely the so-called dramatic monologue, a form of verse not actually original with him, but so frequently and powerfully used, and so stamped with his vigorous personality, that it seldom suggests any other poet. Failure to realize that Browning’s poems *are* monologues, that he wrote almost always in the first person but that he seldom speaks in his own person, often causes much difficulty which might have been avoided.

The dramatic monologue as Browning uses it—the term may be extended to include practically all the poems in this volume—is a lyric or narrative poem in which a single speaker reveals characteristic traits as they are brought out in a situation perhaps highly critical, perhaps deeply significant, perhaps even casual. Frequently the speaker is the chief actor; sometimes he is merely an onlooker. In some of the dramatic monologues the speaker merely soliloquizes; but more commonly Browning suggests, even in a short poem, one or more characters—in addition to the speaker—who are necessary for the situation and set in a background as vivid to the imaginative reader as a picture or a stage setting. Take, for example, one of Browning’s best dramatic monologues, *My Last Duchess*. That it is a monologue is

obvious at once—"There's *my* last duchess—." But if the reader is not familiar with Browning's method, he is apt to proceed without taking the hints, some of them rather subtle, by which the poet suggests the characters of the duke and his last duchess, her tragic marriage, and the rich but heartless setting of Renaissance Italy. By means of his understanding of human nature and his sympathetic imagination Browning has thought and felt himself into the mind and soul of the Duke of Ferrara and has let him speak for himself.

And so it is with most of the poems in this book; the poet becomes for the time being Fra Lippo Lippi or Pheidippides, Caliban or Rabbi Ben Ezra, Johannes Agricola or Cleon, and lets each speak for himself and reveal his soul, and often, in addition, a philosophy of life or the spirit of an age. Some of the poems, like *Abt Vogler* or *A Death in the Desert*, are meditative and quiet; others, like *The Laboratory* or *The Confessional*, are filled with activity and excitement. So varied are the characters and situations that it is impossible to generalize satisfactorily about them; but there are few poems which do not exemplify Browning's poetic creed and few that are not dramatic monologues.

It might seem as if poems of the sort just mentioned, simply because they are dramatic, would give the poet little opportunity for expressing his own ideas and emotions. And yet Browning's poetry is charged with his deepest feelings and thoughts; and his fundamental beliefs about the great issues of life can be brought together and formulated into a definite creed rather more easily and completely than those of most of the other English poets. Even in a poem in which the prevailing mood or the ideas are quite at variance with Browning's own, we are always conscious of his personality. Occasionally he lays aside the mask and speaks in his own person, as at the end of *The Statue and the Bust*, and notably in *One Word More*, but as a rule he is true to his belief that the poet should be a mouthpiece for human nature rather than for his own ideas and experiences. It is chiefly through his characters that we learn the poet's own beliefs.

The intelligent reader seldom cares to have a poet's ideas explained and analysed in detail for him in advance; but in the case of Browning, whose material is varied and frequently

unfamiliar, whose poetic medium and style are unusual, and whose poems, consequently, seem difficult at first, a statement merely in broad outline of the foundations of his philosophy may at once help to stimulate interest and supply some background against which to place individual poems.

Browning's observations of human nature were based upon extensive reading and upon many actual human contacts, for he was both scholarly and social in his tastes. His long experience convinced him that certain beliefs about God and man were incontrovertibly true. As a result we find in his complete works essentially one philosophy of life, satisfying him from first to last, with far less change from youth to maturity to old age than is found in most other poets. Under this philosophy lie a few comparatively simple truths—as he saw them—which may be briefly set forth.

The first of these is the direct result of Browning's conception of work and its relationship to life here and hereafter, and is a paradox: that success in this world consists not of outward and visible attainment, of that which the "low world can value in a trice," as he makes Rabbi Ben Ezra say, but rather of spiritual development through constant effort to reach an unattainable ideal, of aspiration rather than of actual realization, of what man strives to be rather than of what he is. Success, as the world commonly conceives it, may mean to Browning only dismal failure, the result of low ideals easily reached; failure in the eyes of the world, on the other hand, may mean spiritual success, and may be an earnest of ultimate attainment in a future life. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this idea is in *Andrea del Sarto*. Andrea's title, the "faultless painter," suggests professional and artistic success; to Browning it is an indication of pathetic failure. With flawless technique, but without real inspiration, Andrea could go no further:

All is silver-gray  
Placid and perfect with my art; the worse.

And his sense of failure is deepened by his realization that there are innumerable artists who "have the truer light of God in them" but who lack skill, of which he has full measure, to make their inspirations live on canvass. "A man's

reach must exceed his grasp" says Andrea, and the worst failure is an easy success.

Along with such a conception goes a firm belief in the immortality of the soul, a belief which never gave way even under the attacks made upon it during the greater part of Browning's mature life. His conception of the future life was not, however, the conventional one. Believing firmly in the potentialities of man's soul, and that genuine aspiration cannot, by its very nature, be realized here, he felt that there must be a life after death, to give opportunity for realizing earthly ideals, and even for still further development. "Man has forever" chant those who carry the scholar, in *A Grammarian's Funeral*, to his grave on the mountain-top; and in *Abt Vogler* belief in ultimate attainment and in the fulfilment of human aspiration, is expressed in the lines

There shall never be one lost good. What was, shall  
live as before;  
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;  
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much  
good more;  
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven the  
perfect round.

Our failure here is but a triumph's evidence for the fullness of the days, to adapt a statement from the same poem. Suffering and hardship, as is pointed out in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, are not arbitrarily inflicted upon men but are offered as means by which they may grow spiritually and become fit for another life. "The best is yet to be."

Such a philosophy of development here and attainment hereafter presupposes a master mind, planning and working for man's ultimate welfare. Browning's conception of God can hardly be treated briefly; suffice it to say that he shows, through his various characters, the growth of man's conception of the Deity, from the anthropomorphic Setebos of *Caliban* to the purely spiritual God, revealed in Christ, in *A Death in the Desert*. From the reading of his poetry as a whole one can readily feel his personal faith in God, and in Christ as the highest symbol of divine love the world has yet seen. Love, the *summum bonum* to Browning, is virtually

a synonym for God. "He at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God" he wrote of himself in 1877, echoing what he had written in *Paracelsus* over forty years earlier.

Though his faith was emotional rather than intellectual, he never feared to submit it to the test. In *La Saisiaz*, a long poem of a decidedly personal nature, written late in life, he gives his reasons for the faith that is in him. God and the Soul, he says, are the only facts for him.

Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of  
proving, proves them such:  
Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact  
as much.

In the face of rationalism he turned for proof to the voice within him rather than to his mind; by no means hostile to the rapidly advancing scientific thought of his day, though his poetry has comparatively little to say of it, he was never engulfed by it. In an age of doubt he dared to call his soul his own.

Belief in man's development through conflict and failure, unshakable faith in God and immortality, resulted inevitably in a thorough-going optimism, the keynote of Browning's poetry. Surely he lets Fra Lippo Lippi speak for him when he says

This world's no blot for us,  
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:  
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

Browning's is not an ignorant optimism, refusing to face the sterner and uglier sides of life, but one based upon a philosophy in which God makes use of evil for the final good of man. Accept this philosophy or not, the modern reader whose inherent curiosity about life has not "faded into the light of common day" will at least find stimulating food for thought, and will feel a certain satisfaction in coming to know an original mind revealing itself, as a rule, in an original way, vigorous, seldom superficial, sure of human nature's possibilities and of its eventual triumph in a future life which will somehow, under the guidance of supreme Mind and Love, combine perfection with still further development.

But Browning is by no means always so serious as that. To chronicle all life is to show the lighter side as well as the deeper, and we find in Browning's best poetry, usually dramatic and therefore dealing concretely rather than abstractly with human nature, much that will satisfy the common desire for emotional appeal and for excitement. An understanding of his serious commentary on life is necessary to anything like full appreciation even of selected poems; but he generally keeps his philosophy in the background to be brought forth only when character and situation afford natural opportunity.

A poet who speaks optimistically of human nature while recognizing its faults and weaknesses; who speaks with faith and conviction of a supreme Mind, which is also a supreme Love, back of the universe; who can make all sorts of interesting people tell an amazing variety of interesting experiences of mind, soul, and body; who always writes with vigor and sometimes with great beauty; who can stimulate the mind as few English poets have been able to do, and can stir nearly all the emotions, surely has something of interest to offer this or any age. Especially to an age of post-war doubt and disillusionment, Browning can give, over and above mere casual enjoyment, not, perhaps, a completely satisfactory answer to every query, but at least the proof that an original and curious mind, thinking and living in an age of doubt and skepticism, was able to find joy and peace in living and in watching life.

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# POEMS

POHNS

## SONGS FROM PARACELSUS

### I

I hear a voice, perchance I heard  
Long ago, but all too low,  
So that scarce a care it stirred  
If the voice were real or no:  
I heard it in my youth when first  
The waters of my life outburst:  
But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear  
That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—  
As if all poets, God ever meant  
Should save the world, and therefore lent  
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused  
To do his work, or lightly used  
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,  
So, mourn cast off by him forever,—  
As if these leaned in airy ring  
To take me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,  
With our wan troupe make thy home.  
Come, come! for we  
Will not breathe, so much as breathe  
Reproach to thee,  
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.  
So sank we in those old years,  
We who bid thee, come! thou last  
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.  
And altogether we, thy peers,  
Will pardon crave for thee, the last  
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast  
With those who watch but work no more,  
Who gaze on life but live no more.  
Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak  
The message which our lips, too weak,  
Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem

Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!  
 Yet we chose thee a birthplace  
 Where the richness ran to flowers:  
 Couldst not sing one song for grace?  
 Nor make one blossom man's and ours?  
 Must one more recreant to his race  
 Die with unexerted powers,  
 And join us, leaving as he found  
 The world, he was to loosen, bound?  
 Anguish! ever and forever;  
 Still beginning, ending never.  
 Yet, lost and last one, come!  
 How couldst understand, alas,  
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,  
 As their shades did glance and pass  
 Before thee night and day?  
 Thou wast blind as we were dumb:  
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!  
 How should we clothe, how arm the spirit  
 Shall next thy post of life inherit—  
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin?  
 Tell us of thy sad undoing  
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing  
 Our weary task, ever renewing  
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave  
 Our powers, and man they could not save!"

## II

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes  
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,  
 Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes  
 From out her hair: such balsam falls  
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,  
 From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,  
 Spent with the vast and howling main,  
 To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old  
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud  
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;  
 Or shredded perfume, like a cloud

From closet long to quiet vowed,  
With moth'd and dropping arras hung,  
Mouldering her lute and books among,  
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

## III

Over the sea our galleys went,  
With cleaving prows in order brave  
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,  
A gallant armament:  
Each bark built out of a forest-tree  
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,  
And nailed all over the gaping sides,  
Within and without, with black-bull hides,  
Seethed in fat and suppl'd in flame,  
To bear the playful billows' game:  
So, each good ship was rude to see,  
Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent  
Where cedar pales in scented row  
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,  
And an awning drooped the mast below,  
In fold on fold of the purple fine,  
That neither noontide nor starshine  
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,  
Might pierce the regal tenement.  
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad  
We set the sail and plied the oar;  
But when the night-wind blew like breath,  
For joy of one day's voyage more,  
We sang together on the wide sea,  
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;  
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,  
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,  
And in a sleep as calm as death,  
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew  
In a circle round its wondrous tent  
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,  
And with light and perfume, music too:  
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,

And at morn we started beside the mast,  
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck

Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:

“Avoid it,” cried our pilot, “check

The shout, restrain the eager eye!”

But the heaving sea was black behind

For many a night and many a day,

And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;

So, we broke the cedar pales away,

Let the purple awning flap in the wind,

And a statue bright was on every deck!

We shouted, every man of us,

And steered right into the harbour thus,

With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!

All day we built its shrine for each,

A shrine of rock for every one,

Nor paused till in the westering sun

We sat together on the beach

To sing because our task was done.

When lo! what shouts and merry songs:

What laughter all the distance stirs!

A loaded raft with happy throngs

Of gentle islanders!

“Our isles are just at hand,” they cried,

“Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;

Our temple-gates are opened wide,

Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping

For these majestic forms”—they cried.

Oh, then we awoke with sudden start

From our deep dream, and knew, too late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,

Which had received our precious freight:

Yet we called out—“Depart!

Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

Our work is done; we have no heart

To mar our work,”—we cried.

## IV

Thus the Mayne glideth  
Where my love abideth.  
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds  
On through lawns, on through meads,  
On and on, whate'er befall,  
Meandering and musical,  
Though the niggard pasturage  
Bears not on its shaven ledge  
Aught but weeds and waving grasses  
To view the river as it passes,  
Save here and there a scanty patch  
Of primroses too faint to catch  
A weary bee . . . and scarce it pushes  
Its gentle way through 'strangling rushes  
Where the glossy kingfisher  
Flutters when noon-heats are near,  
Glad the shelving banks to shun,  
Red and steaming in the sun,  
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat  
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;  
Where the quick sandpipers flit  
In and out the marl and grit  
That seems to breed them, brown as they:  
Nought disturbs its quiet way,  
Save some lazy stork that springs,  
Trailing it with legs and wings,  
Whom the shy fox from the hill  
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

(1835.)

## CAVALIER TUNES

## I. MARCHING ALONG

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles  
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!  
 Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,  
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup  
 Till you're—

Chorus—Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell  
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!  
 England, good cheer! Rupert is near!  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

Chorus—Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!  
 Hold by the right, you double your might;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

Chorus—March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

## II. GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

Chorus—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,  
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?



Chorus—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!

### III. BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
 Rescue my castle before the hot day  
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,  
 Chorus—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;  
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—  
 Chorus—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:  
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,  
 Chorus—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,  
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!  
 I've better counsellors; what counsel they?  
 Chorus—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

(1842.)

### THE LOST LEADER

#### I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was their's who so little allowed:  
 How all our copper had gone for his service!  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their  
 graves!  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
 —He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

## II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;  
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;  
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:  
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!  
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad confident morning again!  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,  
 Menace our heart ere we master his own;  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne!  
 (1845.)

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM  
 GHENT TO AIX”

[16—]

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
 “Goodspeed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
 “Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;  
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;  
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round  
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;  
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
 Ghent.

(1845.)

### THE FLOWER'S NAME

Here's the garden she walked across,  
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since:  
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss  
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!  
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,  
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung;  
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,  
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk  
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:  
 And here she paused in her gracious talk  
 To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.  
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,  
 I will never think that she passed you by!  
 She loves you noble roses, I know;  
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,  
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;  
 Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,  
 Its soft meandering Spanish name:  
 What a name! Was it love or praise?  
 Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?

I must learn Spanish, one of these days,  
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,  
I may bring her, one of these days,  
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,  
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;  
But do not detain me now; for she lingers  
There, like sunshine over the ground,  
And ever I see her soft white fingers  
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,  
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!  
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not:  
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!  
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,  
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,  
Till round they turn and down they nestle—  
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;  
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;  
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish  
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?  
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,  
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!  
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—  
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

(1845.)

## SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!  
Water your damned flower-pots, do!  
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
God's blood, would not mine kill you!  
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?  
Oh, that rose has prior claims—  
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?  
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:  
*Salve tibi!* I must hear  
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,  
 Sort of season, time of year:  
*Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely*  
*Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:*  
*What's the Latin name for "parsley"?*  
 What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,  
 Laid with care on our own shelf!  
 With a fire-new spoon we've furnished,  
 And a goblet for ourself,  
 Rinsed like something sacrificial  
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps—  
 Marked with L for our initial!  
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

*Saint*, forsooth! While brown Dolores  
 Squats outside the Convent bank  
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
 Steeping tresses in the tank,  
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,  
 —Can't I see his dead eye glow,  
 Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?  
 (That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,  
 Knife and fork he never lays  
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.  
 I the Trinity illustrate,  
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—  
 In three sips the Arian<sup>1</sup> frustrate;  
 While he drains his at one gulp.

Oh, those melons! If he's able  
 We're to have a feast! so nice!  
 One goes to the Abbot's table,  
 All of us get each a slice.

<sup>1</sup> Follower of Arius, a fourth century heretic, who denied the doctrine of the Trinity.

How go on your flowers? None double?  
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?  
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,  
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,<sup>1</sup>  
 Once you trip on it, entails  
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,  
 One sure, if another fails:  
 If I trip him just a-dying,  
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,  
 Spin him round and send him flying  
 Off to hell, a Manichee?<sup>2</sup>

Or, my scrofulous French novel  
 On gray paper with blunt type!  
 Simply glance at it, you grovel  
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:  
 If I double down its pages  
 At the woeful sixteenth print,  
 When he gathers his greengages,  
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture  
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave  
 Such a flaw in the indenture  
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,  
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia  
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*  
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ,*  
*Ave, Virgo!*<sup>3</sup> Gr-r-r—you swine!

(1842.)

<sup>1</sup> Probably Galatians 5:19-21.<sup>2</sup> Follower of Manes, leader of an heretical sect.<sup>3</sup> The prayer *Ave Maria, gratia plena* (Hail Mary, full of grace) slightly changed to suit rhyme and meter.

## THE LABORATORY

## ANCIEN RÉGIME

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
 May gaze through these faint smokes curling whitely,  
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—  
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

He is with her, and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!  
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,  
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?  
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come  
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!  
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head  
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

Quick—is it finished? The color's too grim!  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me!  
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free  
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, "no!"  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall  
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;  
Let death be felt and the proof remain:



Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;  
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:  
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's feel!  
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,  
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!  
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings  
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!  
(1845.)

## THE CONFESSIONAL

### SPAIN

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,  
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope  
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door  
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor  
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled  
Till spite of them I reach the world!

You think Priests just and holy men!  
Before they put me in this den  
I was a human creature too,  
With flesh and blood like one of you,  
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride  
Like lilies in your world outside.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!  
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,  
Was kissed all over till it burned,  
By lips the truest, love e'er turned  
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed  
My soul out in a burning mist.

So, next day when the accustomed train  
Of things grew round my sense again,  
"That is a sin," I said: and slow  
With downcast eyes to church I go,

And pass to the confession-chair,  
And tell the old mild father there.

But when I falter Beltran's name,  
"Ha!" quoth the father; "much I blame  
The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?  
Despair not—strenuously retrieve!  
Nay, I will turn this love of thine  
To lawful love, almost divine;

"For he is young, and led astray,  
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,  
To change the laws of church and state;  
So, thine shall be an angel's fate,  
Who, ere the thunder breaks, shall roll  
Its cloud away and save his soul.

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,  
Thou mayest demand and be possessed  
Of all his plans, and next day steal  
To me, and all those plans reveal,  
That I and every priest, to purge  
His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

That father's beard was long and white,  
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;  
I went back, all on fire with joy,  
And, that same evening, bade the boy  
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,  
Something to prove his love of me.

He told me what he would not tell  
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;  
And I lay listening in such pride!  
And, soon as he had left my side,  
Tripped to the church by morning-light  
To save his soul in his despite.

I told the father all his schemes,  
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;  
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray  
The one spot from his soul away;

To-night he comes, but not the same  
Will look!" At night he never came.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,  
I went forth with a strength new-born.  
The church was empty; something drew  
My steps into the street; I knew  
It led me to the market-place:  
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

That horrible black scaffold dressed,  
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest!  
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,  
Those knotted hands and naked breast,  
Till near one busy hangman pressed,  
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

No part in aught they hope or fear!  
No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,  
No earth, not so much space as pens  
My body in their worst of dens  
But shall bear God and man my cry,  
Lies—lies, again—and still they lie!

(1845.)

### CRISTINA

She should never have looked at me  
If she meant I should not love her!  
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,  
I suppose . . . she may discover  
All her soul to, if she pleases,  
And yet leave much as she found them:  
But I'm not so, and she knew it  
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?  
But I can't tell (there's my weakness)  
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,  
About "need to strew the bleakness  
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed  
That the sea feels"—no "strange yearning

That such souls have, most to lavish  
Where there's chance of least returning."

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!  
But not quite so sunk that moments,  
Sure though seldom, are denied us,  
When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled-up honors perish,  
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,  
While just this or that poor impulse,  
Which for once had play unstifled,  
Seems the sole work of a life-time,  
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,  
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
Ages past the soul existed,  
Here an age 't is resting merely,  
And hence fleets again for ages,  
While the true end, sole and single,  
It stops here for is, this love-way,  
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for,  
And eternally must lose it;  
Better ends may be in prospect,  
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),  
But this life's end and this love-bliss  
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
This she felt as, looking at me,  
Mine and her souls rushed together?

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,  
The world's honours, in derision,  
Trampled out the light for ever:

Never fear but there's provision  
Of the devil's to quench knowledge  
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!  
—Making those who catch God's secret  
Just so much more prize their capture!

Such am I: the secret's mine now!  
She has lost me, I have gained her;  
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,  
I shall pass my life's remainder.  
Life will just hold out the proving  
Both our powers, alone and blended:  
And then, come the next life quickly!  
This world's use will have been ended.  
(1842.)

### THE LOST MISTRESS

All's over, then: does truth sound bitter  
As one at first believes?  
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter  
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,  
I noticed that, to-day;  
One day more bursts them open fully—  
You know the red turns gray.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?  
May I take your hand in mine?  
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest  
Keep much that I resign:

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,  
Though I keep with heart's endeavor,—  
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,  
Though it stay in my soul forever!—

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
Or only a thought stronger;  
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,  
Or so very little longer!

## EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

## FAME

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time,  
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;  
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods  
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods;  
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,  
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;  
 How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er plate,  
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

## LOVE

So, the year's done with!  
*(Love me forever!)*  
 All March begun with,  
 April's endeavor;  
 May-wreaths that bound me  
 June needs must sever;  
 Now snows fall round me,  
 Quenching June's fever—  
*(Love me forever!)*

(1845.)

MEETING AT NIGHT<sup>1</sup>

The gray sea and the long black land;  
 And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
 And the startled little waves that leap  
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
 And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears;

<sup>1</sup> In reply to a question about this and the following poem Browning wrote the following explanation of the last line: ". . . it is his confession of how fleeting is the belief (implied in the first part) that such raptures are self-sufficient and enduring—as for the moment they appear."

A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

## PARTING AT MORNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,  
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:  
And straight was a path of gold for him,  
And the need of a world of men for me.

(1845.)

## SONG

Nay but you, who do not love her,  
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?  
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?  
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
And this last fairest tress of all,  
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because you spend your lives in praising;  
To praise, you search the wide world over:  
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,  
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?  
Above this tress, and this, I touch  
But cannot praise, I love so much!

(1845.)

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

Let's contend no more, Love,  
Strive nor weep:  
All be as before, Love,  
—Only sleep!

What so wild as words are?  
I and thou

## ROBERT BROWNING

In debate, as birds are,  
Hawk on bough!

See the creature stalking  
While we speak!  
Hush and hide the talking,  
Cheek on cheek!

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is  
Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens  
Never pry—  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I.

Be a god and hold me  
With a charm!  
Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm!

Teach me, only teach, Love!  
As I ought  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought—

Meet, if thou require it,  
Both demands,  
Laying flesh and spirit  
In thy hands.

That shall be to-morrow,  
Not to-night:  
I must bury sorrow  
Out of sight:

—Must a little weep, Love,  
(Foolish me!)  
And so fall asleep, Love,  
Loved by thee.

(1855.)



## EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!

Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;  
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
Beginning to die too, in the glass;  
Little has yet been changed, I think:  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;  
It was not her time to love; beside,  
Her life had many a hope and aim,  
Duties enough and little cares,  
And now was quiet, now astir,  
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—  
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?

What, your soul was pure and true,  
The good stars met in your horoscope,  
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—  
And, just because I was thrice as old  
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,  
Each was naught to each, must I be told?  
We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

No, indeed! for God above

Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
And creates the love to reward the love:  
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!  
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:  
Much is to learn, much to forget  
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,

When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)  
In the lower earth, in the years long still,  
That body and soul so pure and gay?

Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—  
 And what you would do with me, in fine,  
 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,  
 Given up myself so many times,  
 Gained me the gains of various men,  
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;  
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
 Either I missed or itself missed me:  
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!  
 What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!  
 My heart seemed full as it could hold;  
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,  
 And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.  
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:  
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!  
 There, that is our secret: go to sleep!  
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.  
 (1855.)

### LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles  
 Miles and miles  
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
 Half-asleep  
 Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop  
 As they crop—  
 Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
 (So they say)  
 Of our country's very capital, its prince  
 Ages since  
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
 Peace or war.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,  
 As you see,  
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
 From the hills

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
    Into one)  
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
    Up like fires  
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
    Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,  
    Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
    Never was!  
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
    And embeds  
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
    Stock or stone—  
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
    Long ago;  
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
    Struck them tame;  
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
    Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
    On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
    Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
    Through the chinks—  
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
    Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced  
    As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
    Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve  
    Smiles to leave  
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
    In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
    Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
     Waits me there  
 In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul  
     For the goal,  
 When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb  
     Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
     Far and wide,  
 All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'  
     Colonnades,  
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,  
     All the men!  
 When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
     Either hand  
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
     Of my face,  
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
     Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
     South and North,  
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high  
     As the sky,  
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—  
     Gold, of course.  
 Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!  
     Earth's returns  
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!  
     Shut them in,  
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!  
     Love is best.

(1855.)

## UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;  
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!  
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;  
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a  
beast.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull  
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!  
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned  
wool.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?  
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to  
take the eye!  
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;  
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who  
hurries by;  
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun  
gets high;  
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,  
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off  
the heights:  
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen  
steam and wheeze,  
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-trees.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;  
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.  
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three  
fingers well,  
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell  
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and  
sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout  
and splash!  
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows  
flash  
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle  
and pash

Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not abash,  
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a  
sort of sash.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,  
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted fore-  
finger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and  
mingle,

Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem atingle.  
Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is shrill,  
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous  
firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever  
and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells  
begin:

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:  
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.  
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,  
draws teeth;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.  
At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping  
hot!

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves  
were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,  
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new  
law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-  
and-so,

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and  
Cicero,

“And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “the skirts of  
Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous  
than ever he preached.”

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne  
smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck  
in her heart!

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;  
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in  
life.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the  
rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays  
passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the  
city!

Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity,  
the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls  
and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the  
yellow candles;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with  
handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better pre-  
vention of scandals:

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!  
(1855.)

### A TOCCATA<sup>1</sup> OF GALUPPI'S

Oh Galuppi,<sup>2</sup> Baldassare, this is very sad to find!

I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and  
blind;

But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy  
mind!

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good  
it brings.

What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants  
were the kings,

<sup>1</sup> The *New English Dictionary* defines a toccata as "a composition for a keyboard instrument, intended to exhibit the touch and technique of the performer, and having the air of an improvisation."

<sup>2</sup> Baldassare Galuppi (1706-1785) was an Italian musician, at one time organist of St. Mark's cathedral, Venice.

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea  
with rings?

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 't is arched by  
. . . what you call  
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept  
the carnival:

I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm  
in May?

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,  
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do  
you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—  
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its  
bed,

O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might  
base his head?

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off  
and afford

—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his  
sword,

While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished,  
sigh on sigh,

Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—  
"Must we die?"

Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we can  
but try!"

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as  
happy?"—"Yes. And you?"

—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did I stop them, when a million  
seemed so few?"

Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,  
I dare say!



"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!  
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by  
one,  
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as  
well undone,  
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see  
the sun.

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor  
swerve,  
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close  
reserve,  
In you come with your cold music till I creep through every  
nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house  
was burned:

"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what  
Venice earned.

The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be dis-  
cerned.

"Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,  
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their  
degree;

Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot  
be!

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and  
drop,

Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were  
the crop:

What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to  
scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of  
all the gold

Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and  
grown old.

(1855.)

## "DE GUSTIBUS—"¹

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
 (If our loves remain)  
 In an English lane,  
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—  
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
 Making love, say,—  
 The happier they!  
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,  
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
 With the beanflowers' boon,  
 And the blackbird's tune,  
 And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world  
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled,  
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
 (If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands)—  
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,  
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,  
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,  
 My sentinel to guard the sands  
 To the water's edge. For, what expands  
 Before the house, but the great opaque  
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?  
 While, in the house, forever crumbles  
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles  
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
 And says there's news to-day—the king  
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The complete proverb is "De gustibus non disputandum" (There is no accounting for tastes).

<sup>2</sup> Right arm.

Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:  
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.  
Italy, my Italy!  
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—  
    (When fortune's malice  
    Lost her, Calais)  
Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, "Italy."  
Such lovers old are I and she:  
So it always was, so shall ever be!

(1855.)

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent<sup>1</sup> to the Northwest died  
 away;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;<sup>1</sup>  
 Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar<sup>1</sup> lay;  
 In the dimmest Northeast distance dawned Gibraltar grand  
 and gray;  
 "Here and here did England help me: how can I help Eng-  
 land?"—say,  
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and  
 pray,  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.  
 (1845.)

SAUL<sup>2</sup>

## I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou  
 speak,  
 Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did  
 kiss his cheek.  
 And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance  
 sent,  
 Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent  
 Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,  
 Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet,  
 For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,  
 Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of  
 praise,  
 To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,  
 And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon  
 life.

## II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his  
 dew  
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue

<sup>1</sup> Places associated with British naval victories.

<sup>2</sup> See I Samuel 16:14-23 for the foundation of this poem.

Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild  
 heat  
 Were now raging to torture the desert!"

## III

Then I, as was meet,  
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,  
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was un-  
 looped;  
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;  
 Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and  
 gone,  
 That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on  
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I  
 prayed.  
 And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid  
 But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice  
 replied.  
 At the first I saw naught but the blackness: but soon I  
 descried  
 A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the  
 upright  
 Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight  
 Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.  
 Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent-roof, showed  
 Saul.

## IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out  
 wide  
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each  
 side;  
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs  
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,  
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come  
 With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark,  
 blind and dumb.

## V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies wet wine round  
 its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those  
 sunbeams like swords!  
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after  
 one,  
 So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.  
 They are white and untorn by the bushes, for, lo, they  
 have fed  
 Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's  
 bed;  
 And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star  
 Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

## VI

—Then the tune for which quails on the cornland will each  
 leave his mate  
 To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate  
 Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has  
 weight  
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—  
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half  
 mouse!  
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our  
 fear,  
 To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

## VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song,  
 when hand  
 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great  
 hearts expand  
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the  
 last song  
 When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear  
 him along,  
 With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm  
 seeds not here  
 To console us? The land has none left such as he on the  
 bier.  
 Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the  
 glad chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom  
 we vaunt  
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the  
 great march  
 Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch  
 Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends? Then,  
 the chorus intoned  
 As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.  
 But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

## VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened  
 apart;  
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles  
 'gan dart  
 From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,  
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.  
 So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there  
 erect.  
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,  
 As I sang:—

## IX

“Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,  
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.  
 Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,  
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver  
 shock  
 Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,  
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.  
 And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust  
 divine,  
 And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught  
 of wine,  
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell  
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.  
 How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ  
 All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!  
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword  
 thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious  
reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men  
sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue  
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,  
I have lived, seen God's hand through a life-time, and all was  
for best'?

Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not  
much, but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working  
whence grew

Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit  
strained true:

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder  
and hope,

Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's  
scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;  
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head  
combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage  
(like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)  
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning  
them,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and  
voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice  
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,  
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its  
array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and  
stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who  
hung propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his  
name.



Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to  
the aim,  
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held  
(he alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad  
bust of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp  
of the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his  
feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your moun-  
tain of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and  
scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,  
there they are!  
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the  
nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his  
crest  
For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder  
thrilled  
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled  
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt  
hope and despair,  
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his  
right hand  
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to  
remand  
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as  
before.  
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any  
more  
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the  
shore,  
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline  
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine  
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded  
arm  
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

## XI

What spell or what charm,  
 (For awhile there was trouble within me,) what next should  
     I urge  
 To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled  
     to the verge  
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields  
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty; beyond, on  
     what fields,  
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye  
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they  
     put by?  
 He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not: he lets me praise  
     life,  
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

## XII

Then fancies grew rife  
 Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me  
     the sheep  
 Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;  
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might  
     lie  
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and  
     the sky;  
 And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed  
     with my flocks,  
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the  
     rocks,  
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show  
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall  
     know!  
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that  
     gains,  
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And  
     now these old trains  
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the  
     string  
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

## XIII

“Yea, my King,”

I began—“thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that  
spring  
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by  
brute:  
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears  
fruit.  
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem  
trembled first  
Till it passed the kid’s lip, the stag’s antler; then safely  
outburst  
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these  
too, in turn,  
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more  
was to learn,  
E’en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our  
dates shall we slight,  
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the  
plight  
Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them? Not  
so! stem and branch  
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-  
wine shall stanch  
Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee such  
wine.  
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!  
By the spirit, when age shall o’ercome thee, thou still shalt  
enjoy  
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a  
boy.  
Crush that life, and behold its wine-running! Each deed  
thou hast done  
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e’en as the  
sun  
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though  
tempests efface,  
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every-  
where trace  
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy  
will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill  
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too  
give forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the  
North

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in  
the past!

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last!

As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,  
So with man—so his power and his beauty forever take  
flight.

No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth  
o'er the years!

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the  
seer's!

Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—  
bid arise

A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to  
the skies,

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose  
fame would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go  
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so  
he did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—  
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which  
fault to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they  
shall spend

(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and  
record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's  
great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's  
a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-  
winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part  
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that  
thou art!"

## XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst  
grant me that day,  
And before it not seldom has granted thy help to essay,  
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my  
sword  
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was  
my word,—  
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor  
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hope-  
less as ever  
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,  
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne  
from man's grave!  
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart  
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I  
took part,  
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!  
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron  
retrieves  
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

## XV

I say then,—my song  
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more  
strong  
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand  
replumed  
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the  
swathes  
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance  
bathes,  
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of  
yore,  
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set  
before.  
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent

The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though  
     much spent  
 Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did  
     choose,  
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.  
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile  
 Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there  
     awhile,  
 And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to  
     raise  
 His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on  
     the praise  
 I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;  
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was  
     'ware  
 That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees  
 Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots  
     which please  
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know  
 If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but  
     slow  
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care  
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through  
     my hair  
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,  
     with kind power—  
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.  
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized  
     mine—  
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the  
     sign?  
 I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,  
 I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;  
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,  
 At this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to  
     dispense!"

## XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song  
     more! outbroke—

## XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:  
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my  
brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him  
again

His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:

I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's  
law.

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty  
tasked

To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was  
asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid  
bare.

Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite  
Care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.  
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)  
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-  
complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.  
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,  
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.  
There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,  
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)  
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst  
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!  
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake  
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's  
sake.

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors  
great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth  
appall?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of  
all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,  
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the  
parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what  
Began?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,  
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone  
can?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less  
power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower  
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,  
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?  
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)  
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more,  
the best?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the  
height

This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring, death's  
minute of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,  
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake  
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself  
set

Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet  
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or  
endure!

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make  
sure;

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,  
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in  
this.

## XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who receive:  
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.  
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my  
prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air,  
From thy will stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread  
Sabaoth:

I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth



To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare  
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my  
despair?

This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what  
man Would do!

See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall  
through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing  
which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me  
now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so  
wilt thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost  
crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with  
death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!  
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand  
the most weak.

'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that  
I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this  
hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the  
Christ stand!"

## XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.  
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,  
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:  
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly  
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—  
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed  
with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and  
 shot  
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted  
 not,  
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,  
 suppressed  
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,  
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.  
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—  
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;  
 In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;  
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-  
 thrills;  
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eyes  
 sidling still  
 Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff  
 and chill  
 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with  
 awe:  
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.  
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the  
 flowers;  
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the  
 vine-bowers:  
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and  
 low,  
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it  
 is so!"

(1845.)

## MY STAR

All that I know  
 Of a certain star  
 Is, it can throw  
 (Like the angled spar)  
 Now a dart of red,  
 Now a dart of blue;  
 Till my friends have said  
 They would fain see, too,  
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:

They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.  
What matter to me if their star is a world?

Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.  
(1855.)

### ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou—  
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now  
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—  
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still  
A whole long life through, had but love its will,  
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand  
The beating of my heart to reach its place.  
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?  
When cry for the old comfort and find none?  
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so! Might I save,  
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave  
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.  
It is not to be granted. But the soul  
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;  
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

It would not be because my eye grew dim  
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him  
Who never is dishonoured in the spark  
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade  
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid  
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean  
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne  
Alike, this body given to show it by!  
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,  
What plaudits from the next world after this,  
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

And is it not the bitterer to think  
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink  
Although thy love was love in very deed?  
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,  
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away  
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;  
If old things remain old things all is well,  
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:  
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,  
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon  
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis brief;  
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,  
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;  
That is a portrait of me on the wall—  
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:  
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,  
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,  
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare  
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,  
"Therefore she is immortally my bride;  
Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,  
I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,  
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,  
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?  
—Where was it till the sunset? where anon  
It will be at the sunrise! what's to blame?"

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take  
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,  
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?  
Is the remainder of the way so long  
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?  
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

—Ah, but the fresher faces! “Is it true,”  
Thou’lt ask, “some eyes are beautiful and new?  
Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?  
And if a man would press his lips to lips  
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips  
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?”

“It cannot change the love still kept for Her,  
More than if such a picture I prefer  
Passing a day with, to a room’s bare side:  
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,  
Yet, while the Titian’s Venus lies at rest,  
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?”

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,  
My own self sell myself, my hand attach  
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—  
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,  
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,  
Thy man’s-truth I was bold to bid God see!

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst  
Away to the new faces—disentranced,  
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more:  
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,  
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print  
Image and superscription once they bore!

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—  
It all comes to the same thing at the end,  
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,  
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum  
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come  
Back to the heart’s place here I keep for thee!

Only, why should it be with stain at all?  
Why must I, ’twixt the leaves of coronal,  
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?  
Why need the other women know so much,  
And talk together, “Such the look and such  
The smile he used to love with, then as now!”

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find  
 Such hardship in the few years left behind,  
     If free to take and light my lamp, and go  
 Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,  
 Seeing thy face on those four sides of it  
     The better that they are so blank, I know!

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er  
 Within my mind each look, get more and more  
     By heart each word, too much to learn at first;  
 And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
 'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause  
     For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:  
 What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,  
     Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?  
 I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—  
 Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:  
     Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind  
 The death I have to go through!—when I find,  
     Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!  
 What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast  
 Until the little minute's sleep is past  
     And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

(1855.)

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I wonder do you feel to-day  
     As I have felt since, hand in hand,  
 We sat down on the grass, to stray  
     In spirit better through the land,  
 This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
     Has tantalized me many times,  
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
     Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
 To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it! First it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed  
Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed  
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope  
Among the honey-meal: and last,  
Everywhere on the grassy slope  
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece  
Of feathery grasses everywhere!  
Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
An everlasting wash of air—  
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,  
Such miracles performed in play,  
Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
Such letting nature have her way  
While heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
Let us be unashamed of soul,  
As earth lies bare to heaven above!  
How is it under our control  
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,  
You that are just so much, no more.  
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!  
Where does the fault lie? What the core  
O' the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,  
See with your eyes, and set my heart  
Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
At your soul's springs,—your part my part  
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,  
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
 Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose  
 And love it more than tongue can speak—  
 Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far  
 Out of that minute? Must I go  
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
 Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!  
 Where is the thread now? Off again!  
 The old trick! Only I discern—  
 Infinite passion, and the pain  
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

(1855.)

### MISCONCEPTIONS

This is a spray the Bird clung to,  
 Making it blossom with pleasure,  
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—  
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

This is a heart the Queen leant on,  
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
 Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
 Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—  
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

(1855.)



## ONE WAY OF LOVE

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves  
And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
She will not turn aside? Alas!  
Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit  
These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
To-day I venture all I know.  
She will not hear my music? So!  
Break the string; fold music's wing:  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?  
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!  
Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

(1855.)

## RESPECTABILITY

Dear, had the world in its caprice  
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,  
Have recognized your plighted troth,  
Am sponsor for you: live in peace!"—  
How many precious months and years  
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,  
Before we found it out at last,  
The world, and what it fears?

How much of priceless life were spent  
With men that every virtue decks,  
And women models of their sex,  
Society's true ornament,—  
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,  
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,

And feel the Boulevart break again  
To warmth and light and bliss?

I know! the world proscribes not love;  
Allows my finger to caress  
Your lips' contour and downiness,  
Provided it supply a glove.  
The world's good word!—the Institute!  
Guizot receives Montalembert!<sup>1</sup>  
Eh? down the court three lampions flare:  
Put forward your best foot!

(1855.)

### LOVE IN A LIFE

Room after room,  
I hunt the house through  
We inhabit together.  
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—  
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her  
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!  
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:  
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,  
And door succeeds door;  
I try the fresh fortune—  
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.  
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.  
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?  
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,  
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

### LIFE IN A LOVE

Escape me?  
Never—  
Beloved!

<sup>1</sup> Famous nineteenth century French politicians of strongly differing views.

While I am I, and you are you,  
 So long as the world contains us both,  
 Me the loving and you the loth,  
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.  
 My life is a fault at last, I fear:  
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed!  
 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.  
 But what if I fail of my purpose here?  
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,  
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,  
 And baffled, get up and begin again,—  
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.  
 While, look but once from your farthest bound  
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,  
 No sooner the old hope goes to ground  
 Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,  
 I shape me—  
 Ever  
 Removed!

(1855.)

## BEFORE

Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.  
 God must judge the couple: leave them as they are  
 —Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,  
 And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story!

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,  
 Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,  
 Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,  
 Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

Who's the culprit of them? How must he conceive  
 God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,  
 "'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her:  
 Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!"

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;  
 Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,  
 When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,  
 And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,  
 Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!  
 For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,  
 With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,  
 A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?  
 When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,  
 And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?  
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!  
 He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,  
 Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?  
 Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!  
 Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,  
 Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,  
 Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives.  
 But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;  
 Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,  
 Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?  
 No?—Let go, then!—Both the fighters to their places:  
 While I count three, step you back as many paces!  
(1855.)

#### AFTER

Take the cloak from his face, and at first  
 Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!  
 Death has done all death can.  
 And, absorbed in the new life he leads,  
 He recks not, he heeds  
 Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike  
 On his senses alike,

And are lost in the solemn and strange  
Surprise of the change.  
Ha, what avails death to erase  
His offence, my disgrace?  
I would we were boys as of old  
In the field, by the fold:  
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn  
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:  
Cover the face!

(1855.)

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL<sup>1</sup>

### A PICTURE AT FANO

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave  
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!  
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
Shall find performed thy special ministry,  
And time come for departure, thou, suspending  
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,  
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,  
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er  
With those wings, white above the child who prays  
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding  
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding  
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

I would not look up thither past thy head  
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,  
For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low  
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,

<sup>1</sup> A picture by the Italian painter Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, commonly called Guercino (1591-1666).

And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!  
I think how I should view the earth and skies  
And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:  
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
What further may be sought for or declared?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
(Alfred,<sup>1</sup> dear friend!)—that little child to pray,  
Holding the little hands up, each to each  
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away  
Over the earth where so much lay before him  
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,  
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
—My angel<sup>2</sup> with me too: and since I care  
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

And since he did not work thus earnestly  
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—  
I took one thought his picture struck from me,  
And spread it out, translating it to song.

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Domett, an old friend of Browning, who had gone to New Zealand to live.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Browning.

My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?  
How rolls the Wairoa<sup>1</sup> at your world's far end?  
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

(1855.)

## MEMORABILIA

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems and new!

But you were living before that,  
And also you are living after;  
And the memory I started at—  
My starting moves your laughter.

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own  
And a certain use in the world no doubt,  
Yet a hand's-breath of it shines alone  
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather  
And there I put inside my breast  
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!  
Well, I forget the rest.

(1855.)

## POPULARITY

Stand still, true poet that you are!  
I know you; let me try and draw you.  
Some night you'll fail us: when afar  
You rise, remember one man saw you,  
Knew you, and named a star!

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend  
That loving hand of his which leads you

<sup>1</sup> A river in New Zealand.

Yet locks you safe from end to end  
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,  
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,  
I know, and let out all the beauty:  
My poet holds the future fast,  
Accepts the coming ages' duty,  
Their present for this past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow  
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;  
"Others give best at first, but thou  
For ever set'st our table praising,  
Keep'st the good wine till now!"

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,  
With few or none to watch and wonder.  
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand  
By Tyre the Old, with ocean-plunder,  
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells  
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes  
Whereof one drop worked miracles,  
And coloured like Astarte's eyes  
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all  
Could criticise, and quote tradition  
How depths of blue sublimed some pall  
—To get which, pricked a king's ambition;  
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,  
The sea has only just o'erwhispered!  
Live whelks, each lip's-beard dripping fresh,  
As if they still the water's lisp heard  
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon  
Such hangings for his cedar-house,



That, when gold-robed he took the throne  
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse  
 Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold  
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,  
 What time, with ardours manifold,  
 The bee goes singing to her groom,  
 Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!  
 Till cunning come to pound and squeeze  
 And clarify,—refine to proof  
 The liquor filtered by degrees,  
 While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,  
 And priced and saleable at last!  
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine  
 To paint the future from the past,  
 Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:  
 Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:  
 Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—  
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
 What porridge had John Keats?

(1855.)

## MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA<sup>1</sup>

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!  
 Answer the question I've put you so oft:

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?<sup>2</sup>  
 See, we're alone in the loft,—

<sup>1</sup> An imaginary composer.

<sup>2</sup> A fugue is defined in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as "a musical movement in which a definite number of parts or voices combine in stating and developing a single theme, the interest being cumulative."

I, the poor organist here,  
Hugues, the composer of note;  
Dead though, and done with, this many a year:  
Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,  
Make the world prick up its ear!

See, the church empties apace:  
Fast they extinguish the lights.  
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!  
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,  
Balks one of holding the base.

See, our huge house of the sounds,  
Hushing its hundreds at once,  
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!  
—O you may challenge them, not a response  
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?  
—March, with the moon to admire,  
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,  
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,  
Put rats and mice to the rout—

Aloys and Jurien and Just—  
Order things back to their place,  
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,  
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,  
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!  
Played I not off-hand and runningly,  
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?  
Here's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:  
Help the axe, give it a helve!

Page after page as I played,  
Every bar's rest, where one wipes  
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,  
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

Sure you were wishful to speak?

You, with brow ruled like a score,  
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,  
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,  
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!

Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
Know what procured me our Company's votes—  
A Master were lauded and sciolists shent,  
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

Well then, speak up, never flinch!

Quick, ere my candle's a snuff  
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—  
I believe in you, but that's not enough:  
Give my conviction a clinch!

First you deliver your phrase

—Nothing propound, that I see,  
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—  
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:  
Off start the Two on their ways.

Straight must a Third interpose,

Volunteer needlessly help;  
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,  
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
Argument's hot to the close.

One dissertates, he is candid;

Two must discept,—has distinguished;  
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;  
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:  
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

One says his say with a difference;

More of expounding, explaining!  
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;  
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining:  
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

One is incisive, corrosive;  
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;  
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;  
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:  
 Five . . . O Danaides,<sup>1</sup> O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;  
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue  
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's<sup>2</sup>  
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?  
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

*Est fuga, volvitur rota.*<sup>3</sup>

On we drift: where looms the dim port?  
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;  
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import—  
 Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

What with affirming, denying,  
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,  
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . . .  
 There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining  
 Under those spider-webs lying!

So your fugue broadens and thickens,  
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
 Till we exclaim—"But where's music, the dickens?  
 Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens  
 —Blackened to the stoutest of tickens?"

I for man's effort am zealous:  
 Prove me such censure unfounded!  
 Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—  
 Hopes 'twas for something, his organ-pipes sounded,  
 Tiring three boys at the bellows?

<sup>1</sup> Daughters of Danaus, who, according to the myth, killed their husbands and as punishment had to labor eternally in Tartarus trying to fill with water a leaky vessel.

<sup>2</sup> A Spanish churchman (1589-1669), the general tendency of whose philosophical writings was to find excuse for human weakness.

<sup>3</sup> It is a flight [*i. e.*, *figure*], the wheel turns of itself.

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,  
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,  
Death ending all with a knife?

Over our heads truth and nature—

Still our life's zigzags and dodges,  
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—  
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,  
Palled beneath Man's usurpature.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,

Cherub and trophy and garland;  
Nothings grow something which quietly closes  
Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land  
Gets through our comments and glozes.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,

(Say we and make up a visage)  
So many men with such various intentions,  
Down the past ages, must know more than this age!  
Leave we the web its dimensions!

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,

Proved a mere mountain in labour?  
Better submit; try again; what's the clef?  
'Faith, 'tis no trifle for pipe and for tabor—  
Four flats, the minor in F.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:

Learning it once, who would lose it?  
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,  
Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—  
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pænâ*<sup>1</sup>

(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)

---

<sup>1</sup> At the risk of my punishment.

Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!  
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,  
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.<sup>1</sup>

While in the roof, if I'm right there,  
 . . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!  
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!  
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.  
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,  
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares  
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?  
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

(1855.)

### INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
 A mile or so away,  
 On a little mound, Napoleon  
 Stood on our storming-day;  
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
 As if to balance the prone brow  
 Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans  
 That soar, to earth may fall,  
 Let once my army-leader Lannes  
 Waver at yonder wall,"—  
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
 A rider, bound on bound  
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew  
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
 And held himself erect  
 By just his horse's mane, a boy:

<sup>1</sup> In the manner of Palestrina. The influence of Palestrina (1526-1594), one of the greatest Italian musicians, was against excessively difficult forms of composition.

You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace  
We've got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
And you'll be there anon  
To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans  
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes;  
"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,  
Smiling the boy fell dead.

(1842.)

## THE PATRIOT

### AN OLD STORY

It was roses, roses, all the way,  
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:  
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
A year ago on this very day.

The air broke into a mist with bells,  
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.  
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—  
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"  
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun  
To give it my loving friends to keep!  
Naught man could do, have I left undone:

And you see my harvest, what I reap  
This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—  
Just a palsied few at the windows set;  
For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,  
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;  
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

Thus I entered, and thus I go!  
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe  
Me?"—God might question; now instead,  
'T is God shall repay: I am safer so.

(1855.)

## MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA<sup>1</sup>

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first

<sup>1</sup> A town in northern Italy, famous during the Renaissance for the brilliance and cruelty of its ruling house.



Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantel laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!  
(1842.)

## COUNT GISMOND

## AIX IN PROVENCE

Christ God who savest man, save most  
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!  
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,  
Chose time and place and company  
To suit it; when he struck at length  
My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw  
All points to one, he must have schemed!  
That miserable morning saw  
Few half so happy as I seemed,  
While being dressed in queen's array  
To give our tourney prize away.

I thought they loved me, did me grace  
To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;  
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;  
If showing mine so caused to bleed  
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped  
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen  
By virtue of her brow and breast;  
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,  
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,  
Had either of them spoke, instead  
Of glancing sideways with still head!

But no: they let me laugh, and sing  
My birthday song quite through, adjust  
The last rose in my garland, fling  
A last look on the mirror, trust  
My arms to each an arm of theirs,  
And so descend the castle-stairs—

And come out on the morning-troop  
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,  
And called me queen, and made me stoop  
Under the canopy—(a streak  
That pierced it, of the outside sun,  
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)---

And they could let me take my state  
And foolish throne amid applause  
Of all come there to celebrate  
My queen's day—Oh I think the cause  
Of much was, they forgot no crowd  
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

However that be, all eyes were bent  
Upon me, when my cousins cast  
Theirs down; 'twas time I should present  
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 'twill last  
No long time . . . the old mist again  
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk  
With his two boys: I can proceed.  
Well, at that moment, who should stalk  
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—  
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"  
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet  
About her! Let her shun the chaste,  
Or lay herself before their feet!  
Shall she whose body I embraced  
A night long, queen it in the day?  
For honour's sake no crowns, I say!"

I? What I answered? As I live,  
I never fancied such a thing  
As answer possible to give.  
What says the body when they spring  
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole  
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew  
That I was saved. I never met  
His face before, but, at first view,  
I felt quite sure that God had set  
Himself to Satan; who would spend  
A minute's mistrust on the end?

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat  
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth  
With one back-handed blow that wrote  
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,  
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,  
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed  
The heart of the joy, with my content  
In watching Gismond unalloyed  
By any doubt of the event:  
God took that on him—I was bid  
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

Did I not watch him while he let  
His armourer just brace his greaves,  
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret  
The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves  
No least stamp out, nor how anon  
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,  
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:  
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,  
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
And said "Here die, but end thy breath  
In full confession, lest thou fleet  
From my first, to God's second death!  
Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied  
To God and her," he said, and died.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked  
—What safe my heart holds, tho' no word  
Could I repeat now, if I tasked  
My powers for ever, to a third  
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest  
Until I sank upon his breast.

Over my head his arm he flung  
Against the world; and scarce I felt  
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)  
A little shifted in its belt:  
For he began to say the while  
How South our home lay many a mile.

So 'mid the shouting multitude  
We two walked forth to never more  
Return. My cousins have pursued  
Their life, untroubled as before  
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place  
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

Our elder boy has got the clear  
Great brow; tho' when his brother's black  
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?  
And have you brought my tercel back?  
I just was telling Adela  
How many birds it struck since May.

(1842.)

### THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Morning, evening, noon and night,  
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I  
Might praise Him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:  
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:  
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,  
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel's-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—  
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:  
Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:  
They sought God side by side.

(1845.)

### INSTANS TYRANNUS<sup>1</sup>

Of the million or two, more or less,  
I rule and possess,  
One man, for some cause undefined,  
Was least to my mind.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—  
For, what was his force?  
I pinned him to earth with my weight  
And persistence of hate:  
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,  
As his lot might be worse.

<sup>1</sup> The threatening tyrant.



“Were the object less mean, would he stand  
At the swing of my hand!  
For obscurity helps him and blots  
The hole where he squats.”  
So, I set my five wits on the stretch  
To inveigle the wretch.  
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,  
Still he couched there perdue;  
I tempted his blood and his flesh,  
Hid in roses my mesh,  
Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth:  
Still he kept to his filth.

Had he kith now or kin, were access  
To his heart, did I press:  
Just a son or a mother to seize!  
No such booty as these.  
Were it simply a friend to pursue  
’Mid my million or two,  
Who could pay me in person or pelf  
What he owes me himself!  
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:  
For the fellow lay safe  
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,  
—Through minuteness, to wit.

Then a humour more great took its place  
At the thought of his face,  
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
The trouble uncouth  
’Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
To put out of its pain.  
And, “no!” I admonished myself,  
“Is one mocked by an elf,  
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
The gravamen’s in that!  
How the lion, who crouches to suit  
His back to my foot,  
Would admire that I stand in debate!  
But the small turns the great  
If it vexes you,—that is the thing!  
Toad or rat vex the king?

Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

So, I soberly laid my last plan  
To extinguish the man.  
Round his creep-hole, with never a break  
Ran my fires for his sake;  
Over-head, did my thunder combine  
With my underground mine:  
Till I looked from my labour content  
To enjoy the event.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?  
Did I say "without friend"?  
Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
The whole sky grew his targe  
With the sun's self for visible boss,  
While an Arm ran across  
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
Where the wretch was safe prest!  
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,  
The man sprang to his feet,  
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!  
—So, I was afraid!

(1855.)

## THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

"Heigho!" yawned one day King Francis,<sup>1</sup>  
"Distance all value enhances!  
When a man's busy, why, leisure  
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:  
'Faith, and at leisure once is he?  
Straightway he wants to be busy.  
Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm  
Caught thinking war the true pastime!  
Is there a reason in metre?

<sup>1</sup> Francis I (1494-1547), to whom the poet Ronsard (1524-1585), who tells the story, was once a page.

Give us your speech, master Peter!"  
I who, if mortal dare say so,  
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,<sup>1</sup>  
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:  
Men are the merest Ixions"—  
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's  
—Heigho—go look at our lions!"  
Such are the sorrowful chances  
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,  
Our company, Francis was leading,  
Increased by new followers tenfold  
Before he arrived at the penfold;  
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen  
At sunset the western horizon.  
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost  
With the dame he professed to adore most.  
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed  
Her, and the horrible pitside;  
For the penfold surrounded a hollow  
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,  
And shelved to the chamber secluded  
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.  
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab  
As glossy and black as a scarab,  
And bade him make sport and at once stir  
Up and out of his den the old monster.  
They opened a hole in the wire-work  
Across it, and dropped there a firework,  
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;  
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,  
The blackness and silence so utter,  
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;  
Then earth in a sudden contortion  
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.  
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot<sup>2</sup>  
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,  
And whose faculties move in no small mist

<sup>1</sup> Publius Ovidius Naso, commonly called Ovid (43 B. C.-17 A. D.)

<sup>2</sup> Court poet to Francis I (1496-1544).

When he versifies David the Psalmist)  
 I should study that brute to describe you  
*Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu!*<sup>1</sup>

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy  
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,  
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,  
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,  
 As over the barrier which bounded  
 His platform, and us who surrounded  
 The barrier, they reached and they rested  
 On space that might stand him in best stead:  
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,  
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,  
 And if, in this minute of wonder,  
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,  
 The lion at last was delivered?  
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!  
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
 He was leagues in the desert already,  
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,  
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain  
 To waylay the date-gathering negress:  
 So guarded he entrance or egress.  
 "How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well swear,  
 (No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere  
 And so can afford the confession,)  
 We exercise wholesome discretion  
 In keeping aloof from his threshold;  
 Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,  
 Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
 The visitor's brisket or sirloin:  
 But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?  
 Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
 Fell close to the lion, and rested:

<sup>1</sup> That lion of the tribe of Judah.

The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested  
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
For months past; he sat there pursuing  
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!  
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion  
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,  
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—  
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
And full in the face of its owner  
Flung the glove.

“Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?  
So should I!”—cried the King—“'twas mere vanity,  
Not love, set that task to humanity!”  
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression  
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—  
As if from no pleasing experiment  
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
So long as the process was needful,—  
As if she had tried in a crucible,  
To what “speeches like gold” were reducible,  
And, finding the finest prove copper,  
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;  
To know what she had *not* to trust to,  
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.  
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;  
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,  
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?  
If she wished not the rash deed's recallment?  
“For I”—so I spoke—“am a poet:  
Human nature,—behoves that I know it!”

She told me, "Too long had I heard  
Of the deed proved alone by the word:  
For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!  
With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!  
And the endless descriptions of death  
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,  
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,  
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
Must offer my love in return.

When I looked on your lion, it brought  
All the dangers at once to my thought,  
Encountered by all sorts of men,  
Before he was lodged in his den,—  
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands  
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
With no King and no Court to applaud,  
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,  
Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,  
—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence  
Of the pit, on no greater pretence  
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,  
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.  
So, wiser I judged it to make  
One trial what 'death for my sake'  
Really meant, while the power was yet mine  
Than to wait until time should define  
Such a phase not so simply as I,  
Who took it to mean just 'to die.'  
The blow a glove gives is but weak:  
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?  
But when the heart suffers a blow,  
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,  
And saw a youth eagerly keeping  
As close as he dared to the doorway.  
No doubt that a noble should more weigh  
His life than befits a plebeian;  
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—  
(I judge by a certain calm fervor

The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)  
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn  
 If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"  
 And when, shortly after, she carried  
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,  
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
 And in short stood so plain a head taller  
 That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?  
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel  
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well.  
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour  
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
 With the easy commission of stretching  
 His legs in the service, and fetching  
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,  
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—  
 But of course this adventure came pat in.  
 And never the King told the story,  
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
 But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer:  
 Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

*Venienti occurrite morbo!*<sup>1</sup>

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

(1845.)

## TIME'S REVENGES

I've a Friend, over the sea;  
 I like him, but he loves me.  
 It all grew out of the books I write;  
 They find such favour in his sight  
 That he slaughters you with savage looks  
 Because you don't admire my books.

<sup>1</sup> Meet the disease as it comes, i. e., Prevention is better than cure.

He does himself though,—and if some vein  
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,  
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,  
Round should I just turn quietly,  
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand  
Till I found him, come from his foreign land  
To be my nurse in this poor place,  
And make my broth, and wash my face  
And light my fire and, all the while,  
Bear with his old good-humoured smile  
That I told him “Better have kept away  
Than come and kill me, night and day,  
With, worse than fever’s throbs and shoots,  
The creaking of his clumsy boots.”  
I am as sure that this he would do,  
As that Saint Paul’s is striking two.  
And I think I had rather . . . woe is me!  
—Yes, rather see him than not see,  
If lifting a hand could seat him there  
Before me in the empty chair  
To-night, when my head aches indeed,  
And I can neither think nor read,  
And make these purple fingers hold  
The pen; this garret’s freezing cold!

And I’ve a Lady—there he wakes,  
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes  
Within me, at her name, to pray  
Fate send some creature in the way  
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,  
Upthrust and outward-borne,  
So I might prove myself that sea  
Of passion which I needs must be!  
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint  
And my style infirm and its figures faint,  
All the critics say, and more blame yet,  
And not one angry word you get.  
But, please you, wonder I would put  
My cheek beneath that lady’s foot  
Rather than trample under mine



The laurels of the Florentine,<sup>1</sup>  
And you shall see how the devil spends  
A fire God gave for other ends!  
I tell you, I stride up and down  
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,  
And feasted with love's perfect feast,  
To think I kill for her, at least,  
Body and soul and peace and fame,  
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,  
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,  
Filled full, eaten out and in  
With the face of her, the eyes of her,  
The lips, the little chin, the stir  
Of shadow round her mouth; and she  
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree  
That I should roast at a slow fire,  
If that would compass her desire  
And make her one whom they invite  
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven; there must be hell;  
Meantime, there is our Earth here—well!

(1845.)

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

That second time they hunted me  
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
And Austria, hounding far and wide  
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,  
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
I made six days a hiding-place  
Of that dry green old aqueduct  
Where I and Charles,<sup>2</sup> when boys, have plucked

<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, born in 1798 and King of Sardinia from 1831 until his death in 1849. As a young man he was sympathetic with the Italians in their attempts to throw off Austrian rule, but later became a strong anti-revolutionist.

The fire-flies from the roof above,  
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:  
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!  
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
The country in my very sight;  
And when that peril ceased at night,  
The sky broke out in red dismay  
With signal-fires; well, there I lay  
Close covered o'er in my recess,  
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
Thinking on Metternich<sup>1</sup> our friend,  
And Charles's miserable end,  
And much beside, two days; the third,  
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
The peasants from the village go  
To work among the maize; you know,  
With us in Lombardy, they bring  
Provisions packed on mules, a string  
With little bells that cheer their task,  
And casks, and boughs on every cask  
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
These I let pass in jingling line,  
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
The peasants from the village, too;  
For at the very rear would troop  
Their wives and sisters in a group  
To help, I knew. When these had passed,  
I threw my glove to strike the last,  
Taking the chance: she did not start,  
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,  
One instant rapidly glanced round,  
And saw me beckon from the ground.  
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;  
She picked my glove up while she stripped  
A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
With that; my glove lay in her breast.  
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:  
It was for Italy I feared.

<sup>1</sup> Austrian statesman (1773-1859), an enemy of Italian independence, referred to here ironically as "our friend."

An hour, and she returned alone  
Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me  
Rested the hopes of Italy.  
I had devised a certain tale  
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
Persuade a peasant of its truth;  
I meant to call a freak of youth  
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
And no temptation to betray.  
But when I saw that woman's face,  
Its calm simplicity of grace,  
Our Italy's own attitude  
In which she walked thus far, and stood,  
Planting each naked foot so firm,  
To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
"I am that man upon whose head  
They fix the price, because I hate  
The Austrians over us: the State  
Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—  
If you betray me to their clutch,  
And be your death, for aught I know,  
If once they find you saved their foe.  
Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
And also paper, pen, and ink,  
And carry safe what I shall write  
To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
Before the duomo shuts; go in,  
And wait till Tenebræ begin;  
Walk to the third confessional,  
Between the pillar and the wall,  
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*  
Say it a second time, then cease;  
And if the voice inside returns,  
*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns  
The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip  
My letter where you placed your lip;  
Then come back happy we have done  
Our mother service—I, the son,  
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
In the same place, with the same eyes:  
I was no surer of sun-rise  
Than of her coming. We conferred  
Of her own prospects, and I heard  
She had a lover—stout and tall,  
She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
“He could do much”—as if some doubt  
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
“She could not speak for others who  
Had other thoughts; herself she knew.”  
And so she brought me drink and food.  
After four days, the scouts pursued  
Another path; at last arrived  
The help my Paduan friends contrived  
To furnish me: she brought the news.  
For the first time I could not choose  
But kiss her hand, and lay my own  
Upon her head—“This faith was shown  
To Italy, our mother; she  
Uses my hand and blesses thee.”  
She followed down to the sea-shore;  
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought  
Concerning—much less wished for—aught  
Beside the good of Italy,  
For which I live and mean to die!  
I never was in love; and since  
Charles proved false, what shall now convince  
My inmost heart I had a friend?  
However, if I pleased to spend  
Real wishes on myself—say, three—  
I know at least what one should be.  
I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his red wet throat distil  
In blood thro’ these two hands. And next,  
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,  
Should die slow of a broken heart  
Under his new employers. Last  
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast

Do I grow old and out of strength.  
 If I resolved to seek at length  
 My father's house again, how scared  
 They all would look, and unprepared!  
 My brothers live in Austria's pay  
 —Disowned me long ago, men say;  
 And all my early mates who used  
 To praise me so—perhaps induced  
 More than one early step of mine—  
 Are turning wise: while some opine  
 "Freedom grows licence," some suspect  
 "Haste breeds delay," and recollect  
 They always said, such premature  
 Beginnings never could endure!  
 So, with a sullen "All's for best,"  
 The land seems settling to its rest.  
 I think then, I should wish to stand  
 This evening in that dear, lost land,  
 Over the sea the thousand miles,  
 And know if yet that woman smiles  
 With the calm smile; some little farm  
 She lives in there, no doubt: what harm  
 If I sat on the door-side bench,  
 And, while her spindle made a trench  
 Fantastically in the dust,  
 Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
 Her children's ages and their names,  
 And what may be the husband's aims  
 For each of them. I'd talk this out,  
 And sit there, for an hour about,  
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how  
 It steals the time! To business now.

(1845.)

### IN A GONDOLA

*He sings.*

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart  
 In this my singing.  
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;

The very night is clinging  
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
 Above me, whence thy face  
 May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say  
 My very words, as if each word  
 Came from you of your own accord,  
 In your own voice, in your own way:  
 "This woman's heart and soul and brain  
 Are mine as much as this gold chain  
 She bids me wear; which" (say again)  
 "I choose to make by cherishing  
 A precious thing, or choose to fling  
 Over the boat-side, ring by ring."  
 And yet once more say . . . no word more!  
 Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,  
 Familiarly by my pet name,  
 Which if the Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all.  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do, break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!  
 What's left but—all of me to take?  
 I am the Three's: prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst! 'T is said, the Arab sage,  
 In practising with gems, can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

*He sings.*

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
 What's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast?

Gray Zanobi's just a-wooing  
To his couch the purchased bride:  
Past we glide!

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
Like a beacon to the blast?  
Guests by hundreds, not one caring  
If the dear host's neck were wried:  
Past we glide!

*She sings.*

The moth's kiss, first!  
Kiss me as if you made believe  
You were not sure, this eve,  
How my face, your flower, had pursed  
Its petals up; so, here and there  
You brush it, till I grow aware  
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

The bee's kiss, now!  
Kiss me as if you entered gay  
My heart at some noonday,  
A bud that dares not disallow  
The claim, so all is rendered up,  
And passively its shattered cup  
Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings.*

What are we two?  
I am a Jew,  
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,  
To a feast of our tribe;  
Where they need thee to bribe  
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
Thy . . . Scatter the vision forever! And now,  
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

Say again, what we are?  
The sprite of a star,  
I lure thee above where the destinies bar

My plumes their full play  
Till a ruddier ray  
Than my pale one announce there is withering away  
Some . . . Scatter the vision forever! And now,  
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?  
The land's lap or the water's breast?  
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
Or swim in lucid shallows just  
Eluding water-lily leaves,  
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
To lock you, whom release he must;  
Which life were best on Summer eves?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?  
From this shoulder let there spring  
A iwing; from this, another wing;  
Wngs, not legs and feet, shall move you!  
Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
With your flesh, but I intend  
They shall deepen to the end,  
Broader, into burning gold,  
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
As if a million sword-blades hurled  
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad ideal  
That came, nor motions to depart!  
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

*Still he muses.*

What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader? While there 's cast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast



Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
His stylet through my back; I reel;  
And . . . is it thou I feel?

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
Past every church that saints and saves,  
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,  
Caught this way? Death 's to fear from flame or steel,  
Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!  
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There!  
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,  
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks.*

Row home? must we row home? Too surely  
Know I where its front 's demurely  
Over the Giudecca piled;  
Window just with window mating,  
Door on door exactly waiting,  
All 's the set face of a child:  
But behind it, where's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread  
Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead!  
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—  
To catch your lory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,

To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony  
To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach,  
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,  
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
Dear lory, may his beak retain  
Ever its delicate rose stain  
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine! What should your chamber do?  
—With all its rarities that ache  
In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
Who brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That dumb they look: your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
Which dare not speak, now to itself  
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur whereso'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell  
As the dry limpet for the lymph  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell!  
And how your pictures must descend

To see each other, friend with friend!  
 Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
 You 'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
 Doing the quaintest courtesies  
 To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!  
 And, deeper into her rock den,  
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
 You'd find retreated from the ken  
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—  
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
 And is not, rather, gravely bent  
 On seeing for himself what toys  
 Are these, his progeny invent,  
 What litter now the board employs  
 Whereon he signed a document  
 That got him murdered! Each enjoys  
 Its night so well, you cannot break  
 The sport up, so, indeed must make  
 More stay with me, for others' sake.

*She speaks.*

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
 Is used to tie the jasmine back  
 That overflows my room with sweets,  
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
 My Zanze! If the ribbon's black,  
 The Three are watching: keep away!

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe  
 A mesh of water-weeds about  
 Its prow, as if he unaware  
 Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!  
 That I may throw a paper out  
 As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.  
 Only one minute more to-night with me?  
 Resume your past self of a month ago!  
 Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
 The lady with the colder breast than snow.  
 Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand  
 Italian painters. The pictures referred to are imaginary.

More than I touch yours when I step to land,  
 And say, "All thanks, Siora!" Heart to heart—  
 And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,  
 Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best  
 Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.  
 Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care  
 Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
 My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn  
 To death, because they never lived: but I  
 Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die!  
(1842.)

### THE TWINS

"GIVE" AND "IT-SHALL-BE-GIVEN-UNTO-YOU"

Grand rough old Martin Luther  
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,  
 The better the uncouth:  
 Do roses stick like burrs?

A beggar asked an alms  
 One day at an abbey-door,  
 Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,  
 The Abbot replied, "We're poor!"

"Poor, who had plenty once,  
 When gifts fell thick as rain:  
 But they give us naught, for the nonce,  
 And how should we give again?"

Then the beggar, "See your sins!  
 Of old, unless I err,  
 Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,  
 Date and Dabitur.

"While Date was in good case  
 Dabitur flourished too:  
 For Dabitur's lenten face  
 No wonder if Date rue.

"Would ye retrieve the one?  
 Try and make plump the other!  
 When Date's penance is done,  
 Dabitur helps his brother.

"Only, beware relapse!"  
 The Abbot hung his head.  
 This beggar might be perhaps  
 An angel, Luther said.

(1854.)

<sup>1</sup> (1483.1546.) A leader of the Protestant Reformation.

## A LIGHT WOMAN

So far as our story approaches the end,  
 Which do you pity the most of us three?—  
 My friend, or the mistress of my friend  
 With her wanton eyes, or me?

My friend was already too good to lose,  
 And seemed in the way of improvement yet,  
 When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose  
 And over him drew her net.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,  
 A shame, said I, if she adds just him  
 To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,  
 The hundredth for a whim!

And before my friend be wholly hers,  
 How easy to prove to him, I said,  
 An eagle's the game her pride prefers,  
 Though she snaps at a wren instead!

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,  
 My hand sought hers as in earnest need,  
 And round she turned for my noble sake,  
 And gave me herself indeed.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,  
 The wren is he, with his maiden face.  
 —You look away and your lip is curled?  
 Patience, a moment's space!

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;  
He eyes me as the basilisk:  
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,  
Eclipsing his sun's disc.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:  
"Though I love her—that, he comprehends—  
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)  
And be loyal to one's friends!"

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame  
As a pear late basking over a wall;  
Just a touch to try and off it came;  
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!  
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?  
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst  
When I gave its stalk a twist.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see:  
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:  
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?  
No hero, I confess.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,  
And matter enough to save one's own:  
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals  
He played with for bits of stone!

One likes to show the truth for the truth;  
That the woman was light is very true:  
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth!  
What wrong have I done to you?

Well, anyhow, here the story stays,  
So far at least as I understand;  
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,  
Here's a subject made your hand!

(1855.)

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I said—Then, dearest, since 't is so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails,  
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,  
    Since this was written and needs must be—  
My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness!  
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame,  
    Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two  
    With life or death in the balance: right!  
The blood replenished me again;  
My last thought was at least not vain:  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So, one day more am I deified.  
    Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
By many benedictions—sun's  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—  
    And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—  
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!  
    Thus lay she a moment on my breast

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.

Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?  
 Had I said that, had I done this,  
 So might I gain, so might I miss.  
 Might she have loved me? just as well  
 She might have hated, who can tell!  
 Where had I been now if the worst befell?  
 And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?  
 Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?  
 We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,  
 Saw other regions, cities new,  
 As the world rushed by on either side.  
 I thought,—All labor, yet no less  
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
 Look at the end of work, contrast  
 The petty done, the undone vast,  
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!  
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?  
 What heart alike conceived and dared?  
 What act proved all its thought had been?  
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?  
 We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
 There's many a crown for who can reach.  
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
 A soldier's doing! what atones?  
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
 My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,  
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell  
 What we felt only; you expressed  
 You hold things beautiful the best,  
 And place them in rhyme so, side by side.  
 'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,  
 Have you yourself what's best for men?



Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—  
Nearer one whit your own sublime  
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?  
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave  
A score of years to Art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus, whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?  
What, man of music, you grown gray  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
“Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
But in music we know how fashions end!”  
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublimate  
My being—had I signed the bond—  
Still one must lead some life beyond,  
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.  
This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such? Try and test!  
I sink back shuddering from the quest.  
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?  
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!  
What if heaven be that, fair and strong  
At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
Whither life's flower is first discerned,  
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?  
What if we still ride on, we two,  
With life forever old yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity,—  
And heaven just prove that I and she  
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

(1855.)

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

## A CHILD'S STORY

*(Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger)*

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,  
By famous Hanover city;  
The river Weser, deep and wide,  
Washes its wall on the southern side;  
A pleasanter spot you never spied;  
But, when begins my ditty,  
Almost five hundred years ago,  
To see the townsfolk suffer so  
From vermin, was a pity.

## II

Rats!  
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,  
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats.

## III

At last the people in a body  
To the Town Hall came flocking:  
" 'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;  
And as for our Corporation—shocking  
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
For dolts that can't or won't determine  
What's best to rid us of our vermin!  
You hope, because you're old and obese,  
To find in the furry civic robe ease?  
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking  
To find the remedy we're lacking,  
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"

At this the Mayor and Corporation  
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

## IV

An hour they sat in council;  
At length the Mayor broke silence:  
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,  
I wish I were a mile hence!  
It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
I'm sure my poor head aches again,  
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"  
Just as he said this, what should hap  
At the chamber-door but a gentle tap?  
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"  
(With the Corporation as he sat,  
Looking little though wondrous fat;  
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
Anything like the sound of a rat  
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

## V

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:  
And in did come the strangest figure!  
His queer long coat from heel to head  
Was half of yellow and half of red,  
And he himself was tall and thin,  
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
But lips where smiles went out and in;  
There was no guessing his kith and kin:  
And nobody could enough admire  
The tall man and his quaint attire.  
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,  
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

## VI

He advanced to the council-table:  
And, "Please your honors," said he, "I'm able,  
By means of a secret charm, to draw  
All creatures living beneath the sun,  
That creep or swim or fly or run,  
After me so as you never saw!  
And I chiefly use my charm  
On creatures that do people harm,  
The mole and toad and newt and viper;  
And people call me the Pied Piper."  
(And here they noticed round his neck  
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;  
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;  
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
As if impatient to be playing  
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;  
I eased in Asia the Nizam  
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:  
And as for what your brain bewilders,  
If I can rid your town of rats  
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"  
"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII

Into the street the Piper stept,  
Smiling first a little smile,  
As if he knew what magic slept  
In his quiet pipe the while;  
Then, like a musical adept,  
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,  
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;

And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
You heard as if an army muttered;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;  
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.  
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
Families by tens and dozens,  
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
Followed the Piper for their lives.  
From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step for step they followed dancing,  
Until they came to the river Weser,  
Wherein all plunged and perished!  
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
Swam across and lived to carry  
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)  
To Rat-land home his commentary:  
Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
Into a cider-press’s gripe:  
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:  
And it seemed as if a voice  
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
Is breathed) called out, ‘Oh rats, rejoice!  
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!  
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,  
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!’  
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
Just as methought it said, ‘Come, bore me!’  
—I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”

## VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,  
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!  
Consult with carpenters and builders,  
And leave in our town not even a trace  
Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face  
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

## IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;  
So did the Corporation too.  
For council dinners made rare havoc  
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;  
And half the money would replenish  
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow!  
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
"Our business was done at the river's brink;  
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
And what's dead can't come to life, I think.  
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
And a matter of money to put in your poke;  
But as for the guilders, what we spoke  
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.  
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

## X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,  
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!  
I've promised to visit by dinner time  
Bagdat, and accept the prime  
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:

With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
And folks who put me in a passion  
May find me pipe after another fashion."

## XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook  
Being worse treated than a Cook?  
Insulted by a lazy ribald  
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?  
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

## XII

Once more he stept into the street,  
And to his lips again  
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;  
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
Never gave the enraptured air)  
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;  
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,  
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
Out came the children running.  
All the little boys and girls,  
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

## XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
Unable to move a step, or cry  
To the children merrily skipping by,  
—Could only follow with the eye  
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
But how the Mayor was on the rack,

And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
As the Piper turned from the High Street  
To where the Weser rolled its waters  
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!  
However, he turned from South to West,  
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,  
And after him the children pressed;  
Great was the joy in every breast.  
"He never can cross that mighty top!  
He's forced to let the piping drop,  
And we shall see our children stop!"  
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;  
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
And when all were in to the very last,  
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.  
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way;  
And in after years, if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—  
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!  
I can't forget that I'm bereft  
Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
Which the Piper also promised me.  
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
Joining the town and just at hand,  
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew  
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
And everything was strange and new;  
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,  
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
And horses were born with eagles' wings:  
And just as I became assured  
My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
The music stopped and I stood still,  
And found myself outside the hill,  
Left alone against my will,  
To go now limping as before,  
And never hear of that country more!"



## XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate  
A text which says that heaven's gate  
Opes to the rich at as easy rate  
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!  
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,  
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,  
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
If he'd only return the way he went,  
And bring the children behind him.  
But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,  
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,  
They made a decree that lawyers never  
Should think their records dated duly  
If, after the day of the month and year,  
These words did not as well appear,  
"And so long after what happened here

On the Twenty-second of July,  
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"  
And the better in memory to fix  
The place of the children's last retreat,  
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
Where any one played on pipe or tabor  
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.  
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern

To shock with mirth a street so solemn;  
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the great church-window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away,  
And there it stands to this very day.  
And I must not omit to say  
That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
Of alien people who ascribe  
The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbors lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterraneous prison

Into which they were trepanned  
 Long time ago in a mighty band  
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
 But how or why, they don't understand.

## XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers  
 Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!  
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,  
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!  
 (1842.)

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,  
     Singing together.  
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes  
     Each in its tether  
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
     Cared-for till cock-crow:  
 Look out if yonder be not day again  
     Rimming the rock-row!  
 That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,  
     Rarer, intenser,  
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
     Chafes in the censor.  
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
     Seek we sepulture  
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,  
     Crowded with culture!  
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
     Clouds overcome it;  
 No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
     Circling its summit.  
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights;  
     Wait ye the warning?  
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;  
     He's for the morning.  
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,  
     'Ware the beholders!

This is our master, famous calm and dead,  
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
Safe from the weather!

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note  
Winter would follow?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!  
My dance is finished?"

No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,  
Make for the city!)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
Over men's pity;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world  
Bent on escaping:

'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, "thou keepest furled?  
Shew me their shaping,

Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—  
Give!"—So, he gowned him,

Straight got by heart that book to its last page:  
Learned, we found him.

Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,  
Accents uncertain:

"Time to taste life," another would have said,  
"Up with the curtain!"

This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?  
Patience a moment!

Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
Still, there's the comment.

Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,  
Painful or easy!

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,  
Ay, nor feel queasy."

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give!  
 Sooner, he spurned it.  
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—  
 Fancy the fabric  
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place  
 Gaping before us.)  
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
 (Hearten our chorus!)  
 That before living he'd learn how to live—  
 No end to learning:  
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning.  
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:  
 Live now or never!"  
 He said, "What's time? leave Now for dogs and apes!  
 Man has Forever."  
 Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:  
*Calculus* racked him:  
 Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:  
*Tussis* attacked him.  
 "Now, Master, take a little rest!"—not he!  
 (Caution redoubled,  
 Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)  
 Not a whit troubled  
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
 Fierce as a dragon  
 He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)  
 Sucked at the flagon.  
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
 Bad is our bargain!  
 Was it not great? did not he throw on God,  
 (He loves the burthen)—  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
 Perfect the earthen?  
 Did not he magnify the mind, show clear  
 Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
     Paid by instalment.  
 He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success  
     Found, or earth's failure:  
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes:  
     Hence with life's pale lure!"  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
     Sees it and does it:  
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
     Dies ere he knows it.  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
     His hundred's soon hit:  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
     Misses an unit.  
 That, has the world here—should he need the next,  
     Let the world mind him!  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
     Seeking shall find him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,  
     Ground he at grammar;  
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:  
     While he could stammer  
 He settled *Hoti's*<sup>1</sup> business—let it be!—  
     Properly based *Oun*<sup>1</sup>—  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*<sup>1</sup>,  
     Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:  
     Hail to your purlieus,  
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
     Swallows and curlews!  
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude below  
     Live, for they can, there:  
 This man decided not to Live but Know—  
     Bury this man there?  
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
     Lightnings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,  
     Peace let the dew send!

<sup>1</sup>*Hoti, oun, de*, are Greek words which cause difficulty to the grammarians.

Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

(1855.)

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

### A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.<sup>1</sup>

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries. R.B.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Templars when that order was suppressed in 1312.]

### I

PRED MONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

The Lord, we look to once for all,

Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:

He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,

Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.

See him no other than as he is!

Give both the infinitudes their due—

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,

As infinite a justice too.

As infinite a justice too. [*Organ: plagal-cadence.*]

<sup>1</sup> Rose of the world; or, stay me with flowers . . . To the tune *virgilius*. . . . I had rejoiced, *O son of Jesse*.

## II

## ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin:  
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
 They bring him now to be burned alive.

*[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say  
 to confirm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

## III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;  
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;  
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,  
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;  
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store;  
 Faggots no few, blocks great and small,  
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—  
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

## CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

## IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow;  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:  
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
 Sing "Laudes"<sup>1</sup> and bid clap-to the torch.

<sup>1</sup> The seven Psalms of praise.

## CHORUS

*Laus Deo*—who bids clap-to the torch.

## V

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
 Is burning alive in Paris square!  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?  
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?  
 Or heave his chest, which a band goes round?  
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?  
 —Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.  
     *[Here one crosseth himself.]*

## VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;  
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.  
     *(Salvâ reverentiâ.<sup>1</sup>)*  
 Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
 I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me!  
 See they servant, the plight wherein I am!  
 Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

## CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou me!"

## VII

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?  
 —Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,  
 Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird?—  
 For she too prattles of ugly names.  
 —Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows?  
 That God is good and the rest is breath;  
 Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?<sup>2</sup>  
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

<sup>1</sup> Saving your reverence [at the blasphemy suggested in the preceding line].

<sup>2</sup> *Song of Solomon*, 2:1.



## CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

## VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:  
Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)

Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.  
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness  
And of temperance and of judgment to come,  
Good Felix trembled, he could no less:  
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

## CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

## IX

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose  
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!  
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;  
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;  
And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!

## CHORUS

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

## X

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,  
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—  
To the Person, he bought and sold again—  
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—  
Feature by feature It took its place:  
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,  
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—  
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

## SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!  
(1855.)

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST

There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the farthest window facing the East  
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"  
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—  
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure,

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—  
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;  
She looked at him, as one who awakes:  
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime, which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,  
Through the first republic's murder there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)  
Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—  
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?  
If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
Only one out of a thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bed chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on her  
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,

Through a certain window facing the East  
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,  
And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—  
"Your window and its world suffice,"  
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim.  
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)  
"My father tarries to bless my state:  
I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;  
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!  
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:  
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap  
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'Twas a very funeral,  
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—  
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
And try if Petraja, cool and green,  
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, "Too much favor for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;  
Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this year,  
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:  
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring  
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—  
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed

One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one day more  
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and earth:  
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth  
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:  
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were simple policy; better wait:  
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,  
Who daily may ride and pass and look  
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book  
Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,  
And she turned from the picture at night to  
    scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam

The glory dropped from their youth and love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:  
But who can take a dream for a truth?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—  
And wondered who the woman was,  
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—  
"Summon here," she suddenly said,  
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who fashions the clay no love will change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons range.

"Make me a face on the window there,  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must spend  
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?  
I did no more while my heart was warm  
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine?  
A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,  
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,  
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eying ever, with earnest eye  
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,  
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch  
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!  
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—  
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,  
Set me on horseback here aloft,  
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:  
That men may admire, when future sun  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in  
bronze—

Admire and say, 'When he was alive  
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb  
At idleness which aspires to strive."

---



So! While these wait the trump of doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of his,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had burned his way through the world to this.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,  
For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will do  
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,  
Sufficient to vindicate itself  
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?  
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram  
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:  
As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
Venture as warily, use the same skill,  
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.  
Let a man contend to the uttermost  
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost

As surely as if it were lawful coin:  
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.  
You of the virtue (we issue join)  
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*<sup>1</sup>

(1855.)

## PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

The rain set early in to-night,  
The sullen wind was soon awake,  
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
And did its worst to vex the lake:  
I listened with heart fit to break.  
When glided in Porphyria; straight  
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;  
Which done, she rose, and from her form  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
And, last, she sat down by my side  
And called me. When no voice replied,  
She put my arm about her waist,  
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
And all her yellow hair displaced,  
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,  
Murmuring how she loved me—she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
And give herself to me forever.  
But passion sometimes would prevail,  
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale

<sup>1</sup> Concerning you, this story.

For love of her, and all in vain:  
So, she was come through wind and rain.  
Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
Happy and proud; at last I knew  
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
Perfectly pure and good: I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around,  
And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
I warily oped her lids: again  
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
And I untightened next the tress  
About her neck; her cheek once more  
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:  
I propped her head up as before,  
Only, this time my shoulder bore  
Her head, which droops upon it still:  
The smiling rosy little head,  
So glad it has its utmost will,  
That all it scorned at once is fled,  
And I, its love, am gained instead!  
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how  
Her darling one wish would be heard.  
And thus we sit together now,  
And all night long we have not stirred,  
And yet God has not said a word!

(1842.)

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK  
TOWER CAME”

(See Edgar's song in *Lear*)

My first thought was, he lied in every word,  
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye

Askance to watch the working of his lie  
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored  
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?  
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare  
All travellers who might find him posted there,  
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh  
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph  
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

If at his counsel I should turn aside  
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,  
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly  
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride  
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,  
So much as gladness that some end might be.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,  
What with my search drawn out through years, my hope  
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—  
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

As when a sick man very near to death  
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end  
The tears, and takes the farewell of each friend,  
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath  
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,  
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

While some discuss if near the other graves  
Be room enough for this, and when a day  
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,  
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:  
And still the man hears all, and only craves  
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,  
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ  
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,

The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed  
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,  
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
Into the path he pointed. All the day  
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim  
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim  
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found  
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,  
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view  
O'er the safe road, 't was gone; gray plain all round:  
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.  
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw  
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing thrive:  
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!  
But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,  
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-trove.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,  
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See  
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,  
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:  
'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,  
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents  
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents  
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk  
All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk  
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair  
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud  
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.

One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,  
Stood stupefied, however he came there:  
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,  
With that red gaunt and colioyed neck a-strain,  
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;  
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;  
I never saw a brute I hated so;  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.  
As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,  
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.  
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:  
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,  
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold  
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,  
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!  
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Giles then, the soul of honor—there he stands  
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.  
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.  
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands  
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands  
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

Better this present than a past like that;  
Back therefore to my darkening path again!  
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.  
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?  
I asked: when something on the dismal flat  
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path  
As unexpected as a serpent comes.  
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;

This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath  
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath  
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,  
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;  
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit  
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:  
The river which had done them all the wrong,  
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared  
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,  
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek  
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!  
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.  
Now for a better country. Vain presage!  
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,  
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank  
Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,  
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.  
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?  
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,  
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work  
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk  
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!  
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,  
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel  
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air  
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,  
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth  
Desperate and done with: (so a fool finds mirth,

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood  
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—  
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,  
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's  
Broke into moss or substances like boils;  
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him  
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim  
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end!  
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught  
To point my footstep further! At the thought,  
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,  
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned  
That brushed my eap—perchance the guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,  
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place  
All round to mountains—with such name to grace  
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.  
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!  
How to get from them was no clearer case.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick  
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—  
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,  
Progress this way. When, in the very nick  
Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
This was the place! those two hills on the right,  
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;  
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,  
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,  
After a life spent training for the sight!

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?  
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,  
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart



In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf  
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf  
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day  
Came back again for that! before it left,  
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:  
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,  
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—  
“Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!”

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled  
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears  
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—  
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,  
And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met  
To view the last of me, a living frame  
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,  
And blew. “*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*”  
(1855.)

## AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE  
OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)  
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,  
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip

Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance (under God)  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)  
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,  
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)  
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also, the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward:  
Some say Vespasian<sup>1</sup> cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;  
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:  
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone,  
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,  
And once a town declared me for a spy;  
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,  
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!  
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
A viscid choler is observable  
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;  
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here  
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,  
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;  
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,  
The Syrian runagate I trust this to?

<sup>1</sup> Roman general who led an army against Palestine in 66 A. D.  
His son Titus succeeded to his command.

His service payeth me a sublimate  
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
There set in order my experiences,  
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—  
Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth  
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,  
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—  
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—  
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
Protesteth his devotion is my price—  
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?  
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
What set me off a-writing first of all.  
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!  
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else  
The Man had something in the look of him—  
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.  
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose  
In the great press of novelty at hand  
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)  
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?  
The very man is gone from me but now,  
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced  
By epilepsy, at the turning-point  
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:  
When by the exhibition of some drug  
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art  
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,  
The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—  
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,  
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
The first conceit that entered might inscribe

Whatever it was minded on the wall  
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent  
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls  
The just-returned and new-established soul  
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
That henceforth she will read or these or none.  
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests  
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)  
—That he was dead and then restored to life  
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:  
—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.  
"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,  
Instead of giving way to time and health,  
Should eat itself into the life of life,  
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!  
For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
The body's habit wholly laudable,  
As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
As he were made and put aside to show.  
Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!  
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?  
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.  
Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—  
He listened not except I spoke to him,  
But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.  
And that's a sample how his years must go.  
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same  
With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,  
And take at once to his impoverished brain  
The sudden element that changes things,  
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand

And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?  
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—  
Warily parsimonious, when no need,  
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?  
All prudent counsel as to what befits  
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:  
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,  
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—  
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:  
The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
The value in proportion of all things,  
Or whether it be little or be much.  
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
Assembled to besiege his city now,  
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—  
'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,  
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt  
With stupor at its very littleness,  
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
He caught prodigious import, whole results;  
And so will turn to us the bystanders  
In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
That we too see not with his opened eyes.  
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look  
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
Or pretermission of the daily craft!  
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child  
At play or in the school or laid asleep  
Will start him to an agony of fear,  
Exasperation, just as like. Demand  
The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object—  
"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord  
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,  
We both would unadvisedly recite  
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,  
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.

Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both  
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!  
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—  
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)  
Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—  
The spiritual life around the earthly life:  
The law of that is known to him as this,  
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.  
So is the man perplexed with impulses  
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,  
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—  
"It should be" balked by "here it cannot be."  
And oft the man's soul springs into his face  
As if he saw again and heard again  
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.  
Something, a word, a tick of the blood within  
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once  
To ashes, who was very fire before,  
In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;  
And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
Professedly the faultier that he knows  
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
Indeed the especial marking of the man  
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—  
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
For that same death which must restore his being  
To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
Divorced even now by premature full growth:  
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
So long as God please, and just how God please.  
He even seeketh not to please God more  
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach  
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,  
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:

How can he give his neighbour the real ground,  
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—  
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old  
“Be it as God please” reassureth him.  
I probed the sore as thy disciple should:  
“How, beast,” said I, “this stolid carelessness  
Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?”  
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.  
The man is apathetic, you deduce?  
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,  
Able and weak, affects the very brutes  
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—  
As a wise workman recognises tools  
In a master’s workshop, loving what they make.  
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:  
Only impatient, let him do his best,  
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—  
An indignation which is promptly curbed:  
As when in certain travel I have feigned  
To be an ignoramus in our art  
According to some preconceived design,  
And happed to hear the land’s practitioners,  
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
Prattle fantastically on disease,  
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this  
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,  
Conferring with the frankness that befits?  
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
Accused—our learning’s fate—of wizardry,  
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
And creed prodigious as described to me.  
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell  
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
To occult learning in our lord the sage  
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)  
Was wrought by the mad people—that’s their wont!  
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,

To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!  
 The other imputations must be lies;  
 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,  
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.  
 (And after all, our patient Lazarus  
 Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?  
 Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech  
 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)  
 This man so cured regards the curer, then,  
 As—God forgive me!—who but God himself,  
 Creater and sustainer of the world,  
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!  
 —'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,  
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,  
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for ought I know,  
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,  
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
 In hearing of this very Lazarus  
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?  
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
 Calling at every moment for remark?  
 I noticed on the margin of a pool  
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!  
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
 Good cause for the peculiar interest  
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:  
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills  
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came  
 A moon made like a face with certain spots  
 Multiform, manifold, and menacing:  
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,  
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked



To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,  
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.  
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;  
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—  
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!  
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,  
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,  
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!"  
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.<sup>1</sup>  
(1855.)

## JOHANNES AGRICOLA<sup>2</sup> IN MEDITATION

There's heaven above, and night by night  
 I look right through its gorgeous roof;  
 No suns and moons though e'er so bright  
 Avail to stop me; splendour-proof  
 I keep the broods of stars aloof:  
 For I intend to get to God,  
 For 'tis to God I speed so fast,  
 For in God's breast, my own abode,  
 Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,  
 I lay my spirit down at last.  
 I lie where I have always lain,  
 God smiles as he has always smiled;  
 Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,  
 Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled  
 The heavens, God thought on me his child;  
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed  
 Its circumstances every one  
 To the minutest; ay, God said  
 This head this hand should rest upon

<sup>1</sup> The account of the raising of Lazarus is in St. John 11: 1-46.

<sup>2</sup> A friend of Martin Luther.

Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.  
And having thus created me,  
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,  
Guiltless for ever, like a tree  
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know  
The law by which it prospers so:  
But sure that thought and word and deed  
All go to swell his love for me,  
Me, made because that love had need  
Of something irreversibly  
Pledged solely its content to be.  
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,  
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!  
I have God's warrant, could I blend  
All hideous sins, as in a cup,  
To drink the mingled venoms up;  
Secure my nature will convert  
The draught to blossoming gladness fast:  
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,  
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,  
As from the first its lot was cast.  
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed  
By unexhausted power to bless,  
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,  
And those its waves of flame oppress,  
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;  
Whose life on earth aspired to be  
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win  
If not love like God's love for me,  
At least to keep his anger in;  
And all their striving turned to sin.  
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white  
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,  
The martyr, the wan acolyte,  
The incense-swinging child,—undone  
Before God fashioned star or sun!  
God, whom I praise; how could I praise,  
If such as I might understand,  
Make out and reckon on his ways,  
And bargain for his love, and stand,  
Paying a price, at his right hand?

(1842.)

PICTOR IGNOTUS<sup>1</sup>

FLORENCE, 15—

I could have painted pictures like that youth's  
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar  
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!  
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk  
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk  
To the centre, of an instant; or around  
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
The license and the limit, space and bound,  
Allowed to truth made visible in man.  
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
Over the canvass could my hand have flung,  
Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;  
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,  
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood  
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;  
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—  
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?  
What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,  
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,  
Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,  
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,  
Through old streets named afresh from the event,  
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet  
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct  
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—  
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
With love about, and praise, till life should end,

<sup>1</sup> The unknown painter.

And then not go to heaven, but linger here,  
 Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—  
 The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!  
 But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights  
 Have scared me, like the revels though a door  
 Of some strange house of idols at its rites!

This world seemed not the world it was before:  
 Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped  
 . . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun  
 To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped  
 Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
 They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
 Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
 And where they live needs must our pictures live  
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,

Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
 Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,  
 This likes me more, and this affects me less!”  
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles

My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,  
 With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,—

At least no merchant traffics in my heart;  
 The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
 Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:

Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
 While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,  
 They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,  
 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.

So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!  
 O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?  
 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?

Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

(1845.)

FRA LIPPO LIPPI<sup>1</sup>

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!  
You need not clap your torches to my face.  
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!  
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,  
And here you catch me at an alley's end  
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?  
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,  
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,  
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
*Weke, weke*, that's crept to keep him company!  
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take  
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,  
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?  
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?  
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!  
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,  
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!  
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves  
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:  
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets  
And count fair prize what comes into their net?  
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!  
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.  
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go  
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
Of the munificent House that harbors me  
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)  
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—  
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds  
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)  
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!  
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,

<sup>1</sup> Florentine painter, member of the Carmine friars (1406-1469).  
Cosimo de Medici was his patron.

A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!  
 Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
 You know them and they take you? like enough!  
 I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—  
 'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.  
 Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.  
 Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands  
 To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
 And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,  
 A-painting for the great man, saints and saints  
 And saints again. I could not paint all night—  
 Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.  
 There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
 A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—  
*Flower o' the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*  
*Flower o' the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?*  
*Flower o' the thyme*—and so on. Round they went.  
 Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter  
 Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim  
     shapes,  
 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and  
     blood,  
 That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,  
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
 All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,  
 There was a ladder! Down I let myself,  
 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,  
 And after them. I came up with the fun  
 Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—  
*Flower o' the rose,*  
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows?*  
 And so as I was stealing back again  
 To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
 Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work  
 On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
 With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,  
 You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!  
 Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—

Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!  
If Master Cosimo announced himself,  
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!  
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!  
I was a baby when my mother died  
And father died and left me in the street.  
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two  
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,  
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,  
My stomach being empty as your hat,  
The wind doubled me up and down I went.  
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,  
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)  
And so along the wall, over the bridge,  
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,  
While I stood munching my first bread that month:  
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father,  
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—  
"To quit this very miserable world?  
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"  
thought I;  
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;  
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,  
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,  
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici  
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.  
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,  
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,  
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,  
And day-long blessed idleness beside!  
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.  
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.  
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books;  
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!  
*Flower o' the clove,*  
*All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!*  
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets  
Eight years together, as my fortune was,  
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling  
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,  
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—

Which gentleman processional and fine,  
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,  
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—  
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop  
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—  
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,  
He learns the look of things, and none the less  
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.  
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.  
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,  
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,  
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,  
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,  
And made a string of pictures of the world  
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked  
black.

"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?  
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.  
What if at last we get our man of parts,  
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese  
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine  
And put the front on it that ought to be!"  
And hereupon he bade me daub away.  
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,  
Never was such prompt disemburdening.  
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,  
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,  
From good old gossips waiting to confess  
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—  
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there  
With the little children round him in a row  
Of admiration, half for his beard and half  
For that white anger of his victim's son  
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
Signing himself with the other because of Christ  
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this  
After the passion of a thousand years)



Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,  
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve  
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,  
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers  
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.  
I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and have;  
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,  
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud  
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,  
Being simple bodies,—“That's the very man!  
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!  
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes  
To care about his asthma: it's the life!”  
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd;  
Their betters took their turn to see and say:  
The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
And stopped all that in no time. “How? what's here?  
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!  
Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true  
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!  
Your business is not to catch men with show,  
With homage to the perishable clay,  
But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.  
Your business is to paint the souls of men—  
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .  
It's vapor done up like a new-born babe—  
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)  
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!  
Give us no more of body than shows soul!  
Here's Giotto,<sup>1</sup> with his Saint a-praising God,  
That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?  
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head  
With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?  
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!  
Rub all out, try at it a second time.  
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,  
She's just my niece . . . Herodias,<sup>2</sup> I would say,—

<sup>1</sup> Italian artist (1267?-1337).

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew 14:6-11.

Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!  
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?  
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white  
When what you put for yellow's simply black,  
And any sort of meaning looks intense  
When all beside itself means and looks naught.  
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,  
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty  
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?  
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,  
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?  
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—  
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)  
If you get simple beauty and naught else,  
You get about the best thing God invents:  
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have  
missed,  
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.  
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,  
And so the thing has gone on ever since.  
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:  
You should not take a fellow eight years old  
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.  
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—  
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!  
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—  
Those great rings serve more purposes than just  
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!  
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes  
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!  
You're not of the true painters, great and old;

Brother Angelico's<sup>1</sup> the man, you'll find;  
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:  
Fag on a flesh, you'll never make the third!"'  
*Flower o' the pine,*  
*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to*  
*mine!*

I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!  
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,  
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,  
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint  
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;  
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come  
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—  
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—  
*(Flower o' the peach,*  
*Death for us all, and his own life for each!)*  
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,  
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,  
And I do these wild things in sheer despise,  
And play the fooleries you catch me at,  
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass  
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,  
Although the miller does not preach to him  
The only good of grass is to make chaff.  
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—  
May they or may n't they? All I want's the thing  
Settled forever one way. As it is,  
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:  
You don't like what you only like too much,  
You do like what, if given you at your word,  
You find abundantly detestable.  
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;  
I always see the garden and God there  
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,  
The value and significance of flesh,  
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.  
But see, now—why, I see as certainly

<sup>1</sup> Fra Angelico (1387-1455), greatest of Italian monastic painters.

As that the morning-star's about to shine,  
 What will hap some day. We've a youngster here  
 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,  
 Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:  
 His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—  
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—  
 He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,  
 I hope so—though I never live so long,  
 I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!  
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike;  
 However, you're my man, you've seen the world  
 —The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
 The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,  
 Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!  
 —For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,  
 The mountain round it and the sky above,  
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,  
 These are the frame to? What's it all about?  
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,  
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.  
 But why not do as well as say,—paint these  
 Just as they are; careless what comes of it?  
 God's works—paint any one, and count it crime  
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works  
 Are here already; nature is complete:  
 Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)  
 There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."  
 For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love  
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
 And so they are better, painted—better to us,  
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;  
 God uses us to help each other so,  
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,  
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,  
 And trust me but you should, though! How much  
     more,  
 If I drew higher things with the same truth!  
 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
 Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,

It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,  
 Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:  
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.  
 "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"  
 Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain  
 It does not say to folk—remember matins,  
 Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this  
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones,  
 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,  
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
 I painted a Saint Laurence six months since  
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:  
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"  
 I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—  
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
 Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,  
 The pious people have so eased their own  
 With coming to say prayers there in a rage:  
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
 Expect another job this time next year,  
 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—  
 Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word  
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns  
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!  
 Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!  
 It's natural a poor monk out of bounds  
 Should have his apt word to excuse himself:  
 And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
 I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece  
 . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go,  
 see  
 Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!  
 They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint<sup>1</sup>  
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,

<sup>1</sup> The picture described is his *Coronation of the Virgin*, now in a gallery in Florence.

Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet  
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root  
 When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.  
 And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—  
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,  
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white  
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,  
 And Job, I must have him there past mistake,  
 The man of Uz (and Us without the z,  
 Painters who need his patience). Well, all these  
 Secured at their devotion, up shall come  
 Out of a corner when you least expect,  
 As one by a dark stair into a great light,  
 Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—  
 Mazed, motionless, and moonstruck—I'm the man!  
 Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?  
 I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,  
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,  
 I, in this presence, this pure company!  
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?  
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing  
 Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"  
 —Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—  
 He made you and devised you, after all,  
 Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there  
 draw—  
 His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!*<sup>1</sup> " So, all smile—  
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
 Under the cover of a hundred wings  
 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay  
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,  
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
 The palm of her, the little lily thing  
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,

<sup>1</sup> This man did the work.

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.  
And so all's saved for me, and for the church  
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!  
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!  
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,  
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!  
(1855.)

ANDREA DEL SARTO<sup>1</sup>

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER")

But do not let us quarrel any more,  
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:  
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?  
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,  
Treat his own subject after his own way,  
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
And shut the money into this small hand  
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?  
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!  
I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it seems  
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
Here by the window with your hand in mine  
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve  
For each of the five pictures we require:  
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!  
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—

<sup>1</sup> Florentine artist (1487-1531).

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.  
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,  
There's what we painters call our harmony!  
A common grayness silvers everything,—  
All in a twilight, you and I alike  
—You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.  
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead;  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!  
This chamber for example—turn your head—  
All that's behind us! You don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art,  
But you can hear at least when people speak:  
And that cartoon, the second from the door  
—It is the thing, Love! so such thing should be—  
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know,  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate 't is easy, all of it!  
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:  
I do what many dream of all their lives,  
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,



And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive .  
To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—  
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,  
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!  
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.  
There burns a truer light of God in them,  
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,  
Heart, or what'er else, than goes on to prompt  
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine,  
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—  
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
I, painting from myself and to myself,  
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,  
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?  
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?  
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray  
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!  
I know both what I want and what might gain,  
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
"Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.  
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth  
The Urbinate,<sup>1</sup> who died five years ago.  
( 'T is copied, George Vasari<sup>2</sup> sent it me.)  
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,

<sup>1</sup> The great artist Raphael (1483-1520), who was born at Urbino.

<sup>2</sup> Author of *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters* (1511-1571).

Above and through his art—for it gives way;  
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,  
 He means right—that, a child may understand.  
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:  
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?  
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!  
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—  
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,  
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—  
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!  
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
 "God and the glory! never care for gain.  
 The present by the future, what is that?  
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!<sup>1</sup>  
 Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"  
 I might have done it for you. So it seems:  
 Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;  
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?  
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?  
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not;  
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:  
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—  
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
 'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,  
 That I am something underrated here,  
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,  
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
 The best is when they pass and look aside;  
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.

<sup>1</sup> Michelangelo (1475-1564), Buonarrsti, painter, sculptor, and architect.

Well may they speak! That Francis,<sup>1</sup> that first time,  
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!  
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—  
One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
I painting proudly with his breath on me  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—  
And, best of all, this, this face beyond,  
This in the background, waiting on my work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward!  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?  
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—  
'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.  
How could it end in any other way?  
You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since  
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
Let my hands frame your face in your hairs' gold,  
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;  
The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—  
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,  
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .  
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,

<sup>1</sup> King Francis I (1494-1547), at one time a patron of Andrea del Sarto.

Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,  
Who, were he set to plan and execute  
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"  
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.  
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,  
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!  
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!  
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?  
Do you forget already words like those?)  
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—  
Is, whether you're—not graceful—but more pleased.  
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
If you would sit thus by me every night  
I should work better, do you comprehend?  
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;  
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.  
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,  
Inside the melancholy little house  
We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,  
The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with!  
Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?  
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?  
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?  
While hand and eye and something of a heart  
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?  
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The gray remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint, were I but back in France,  
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,

Not yours this time! I want you at my side  
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
 I take the subjects for his corridor,  
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
 What's better and what's all I care about,  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!  
 Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,  
 The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
 I regret little, I would change still less.  
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
 The very wrong to Francis!—it is true  
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
 My father and my mother died of want.  
 Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
 How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.  
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:  
 And I have labored somewhat in my time  
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son  
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!  
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
 You loved me quite enough, it seems, to-night.  
 This must suffice me here. What would one have?  
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—  
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup>  
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
 For Leonard,<sup>2</sup> Rafael, Agnolo and me  
 To cover—the three first without a wife,  
 While I have mine! So—still they overcome  
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my love.

(1855.)

<sup>1</sup> Revelation 21:10-17.

<sup>2</sup> Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Italian painter. Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo are considered the greatest of Italian Renaissance painters.

# THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!  
 Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?  
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—  
 She, men would have to be your mother once,  
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!  
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,  
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,  
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.  
 Life, how and what is it? As here I lie  
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
 Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.  
 Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;  
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought  
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:  
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;  
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the Corner South  
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!  
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence .  
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,  
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
 And up into the aery dome where live  
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:  
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,  
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:  
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe  
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.  
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
 Put me where I may look at him! True peach,  
 Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!  
 Draw close: that conflagration of my church  
 —What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!  
 My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig  
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,

Drop water gently till the surface sink,  
And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not, I! . . .  
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,  
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,  
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .  
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,  
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands  
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!  
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:  
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?  
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—  
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else  
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?  
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance  
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,  
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,  
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope  
To revel down my villas while I gasp  
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine  
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!  
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!  
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve  
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!  
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—  
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray  
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,  
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?  
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,  
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—  
Tully, my masters? Ulpian<sup>2</sup> serves his need!

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B. C.).

<sup>2</sup> Roman legal writer of the third century A. D.

And then how I shall lie through centuries,  
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
 And see God made and eaten all day long,  
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!  
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,  
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,  
 And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:  
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,  
 Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,  
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT<sup>1</sup> quoth our friend?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope  
 My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase  
 With grapes, and add a vizer and a Term,<sup>2</sup>  
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,  
 To comfort me on my entablature  
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!  
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—  
 Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat

<sup>1</sup> He was illustrious.

<sup>2</sup> Short for Terminus, a Roman god of boundaries.



As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—  
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world!  
 Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,  
 But in a row: and, going, turn your backs  
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,  
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,  
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—  
 Old Gandolf—at me, from his onion-stone,  
 As still he envied me, so fair she was!

(1845.)

## CLEON

“AS CERTAIN ALSO OF YOUR OWN POETS HAVE SAID”—<sup>1</sup>

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles,  
 Lily on lily, that o’erlace the sea,  
 And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps  
 “Greece”)—  
 To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:  
 I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
 The master of thy galley still unlades  
 Gift after gift; they block my court at last  
 And pile themselves along its portico  
 Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:  
 And one white she-slave from the group dispersed  
 Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work  
 Pavement, at once my nation’s work and gift,  
 Now covered with this settle-down of doves),  
 One lyric woman, in her crocus vest  
 Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands  
 Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
 Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!  
 For so shall men remark, in such an act  
 Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,

<sup>1</sup> The quotation which completes the sentence is “For we are also his offspring.” (Acts 17:28).

Thy recognition of the use of life;  
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough  
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—  
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,  
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,  
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim  
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,—  
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—  
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,  
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:  
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.  
For this, I promise on thy festival  
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,  
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak  
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—  
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,  
Within the eventual element of calm

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.  
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life  
I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.  
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,  
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.  
The image of the sun-god on the phare,  
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;  
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.  
I know the true proportions of a man  
And woman also, not observed before;  
And I have written three books on the soul,  
Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
And putting us to ignorance again.  
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,  
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;  
Thus much the people know and recognize,

Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.  
We of these latter days, with greater mind  
Than our forerunners, since more composite,  
Look not so great, beside their simple way,  
To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
One mind-point and no other at a time,—  
Compares the small part of a man of us  
With some whole man of the heroic age,  
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours:  
And ours is greater, had we skill to know:  
For, what we call this life of men on earth,  
This sequence of the soul's achievements here  
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,  
Intended to be viewed eventually  
As a great whole, not analyzed to parts,  
But each part having reference to all,—  
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,  
Endure effacement by another part?  
Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again?  
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,  
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—  
He did not overlay them, superimpose  
The new upon the old and blot it out,  
But laid them on a level in his work,  
Making at last a picture; there it lies.  
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,  
The portions of mankind; and after, so,  
Occurred the combination of the same.  
For where had been a progress, otherwise?  
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—  
In such a synthesis the labor ends.  
Now mark me! those divine men of old time  
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point  
The outside verge that rounds our faculty;  
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?  
It takes but little water just to touch  
At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest  
In due succession: but the finer air  
Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
Though no less universally, can touch

The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,  
Fills it more fully than the water did;  
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
Resolved into a subtler element.  
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
Up to the visible height—and after, void;  
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus  
To vindicate his purpose in our life:  
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?  
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,  
That he or other god descended here  
And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
What, in its nature, never can be shown,  
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,  
The worth both absolute and relative  
Of all his children from the birth of time,  
His instruments for all appointed work.  
I now go on to image,—might we hear  
The judgment which should give the due to each,  
Show where the labor lay and where the ease,  
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!  
This is a dream:—but no dream, let us hope,  
That years and days, the summers and the springs,  
Follow each other with unwaning powers.  
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far,  
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;  
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;  
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;  
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;  
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,  
Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,  
Refines upon the women of my youth.  
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?  
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—  
Nor swept string like Terpander,<sup>1</sup> no—nor carved  
And painted men like Phidias<sup>2</sup> and his friend:

<sup>1</sup> Lesbian musician (about 650 B. C.).

<sup>2</sup> Athenian sculptor and architect, born about 500 B. C. The friend referred to was Pericles, ruler of Athens from 444-429 B. C., a period of the highest culture.

I am not great as they are, point by point.  
But I have entered into sympathy  
With these four, running these into one soul,  
Who, separate, ignored each other's art.  
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?  
The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed  
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's  
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,  
And show a better flower if not so large:  
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods  
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare  
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,  
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?  
It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?  
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.  
This being with me as I declare, O king,  
My works, in all these varicolored kinds,  
So done by me, accepted so by men—  
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)  
I must not be accounted to attain  
The very crown and proper end of life?  
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
I face death with success in my right hand:  
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself  
The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou)  
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave naught.  
Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
The pictures men shall study; while my life,  
Complete and whole now in its power and joy,  
Dies altogether with my brain and arm,  
Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?  
The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,  
Set on the promontory which I named.  
And that—some supple courtier of my heir  
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,  
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.  
I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.  
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,  
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?  
That imperfection means perfection hid,  
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?  
If, in the morning of philosophy,  
Ere aught had been recorded, nay, perceived,  
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked  
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—  
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced  
The perfectness of others yet unseen.  
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee,  
"Shall I go on a step, improve on this,  
Do more for visible creatures than is done?"  
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each  
Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.  
All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,  
The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims  
And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,  
Till life's mechanics can no further go—  
And all this joy in natural life is put  
Like fire from off thy finger into each,  
So exquisitely perfect is the same.  
But 't is pure fire, and they mere matter are;  
It has them, not they it: and so I choose  
For man, thy last premeditated work  
(If I might add a glory to the scheme),  
That a third thing should stand apart from both,  
A quality arise within his soul,  
Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
And so be happy." Man might live at first  
The animal life: but is there nothing more?  
In due time, let him critically learn  
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know  
Of his own life's adaptabilities,  
The more joy-giving will his life become.  
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:  
"Let progress end at once,—man make no step  
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."  
In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,  
And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.  
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,  
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life  
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;  
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!  
For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—  
We know this, which we had not else perceived)  
That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,  
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more  
Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!  
Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought  
Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge  
Our bounded physical recipiency,  
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,  
It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,  
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
They praise a fountain in my garden here  
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow  
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.  
What if I told her, it is just a thread  
From that great river which the hills shut up,  
And mock her with my leave to take the same?  
The artificer has given her one small tube  
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots  
To know she might spout oceans if she could?  
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:

And so a man can use but a man's joy  
 While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,  
 "See, man, how happy I live, and despair—  
 That I may be still happier—for thy use!"  
 If this were so, we could not thank our lord,  
 As hearts beat on to doing; 't is not so—  
 Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?  
 Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask,  
 And get no answer, and agree in sum,  
 O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.  
 Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—  
 Holding joy not impossible to one  
 With artist-gifts—to such a man as I  
 Who leave behind me living works indeed;  
 For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
 What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,  
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
 (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)  
 With feeling joy? confound the knowing how  
 And showing how to live (my faculty)  
 With actually living?—Otherwise  
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?  
 Because in my great epos I display  
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—  
 Is this as though I acted? if I paint,  
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?  
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself  
 The many years of pain that taught me art!  
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:  
 But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too.  
 Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,  
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
 I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.  
 I get to sing of love, when grown too gray  
 For being beloved: she turns to that young man,  
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.  
 I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!



“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,  
To find thee trip on such a mere word) “what  
Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:  
Sappho<sup>1</sup> survives, because we sing her songs,  
And Æschylus,<sup>2</sup> because we read his plays!”  
Why, if they live still, let them come and take  
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,  
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?  
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,  
In this, that every day my sense of joy  
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;  
While every day my hairs fall more and more,  
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—  
The horror quickening still from year to year,  
The consummation coming past escape,  
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—  
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,  
Being present still to mock me in men’s mouths,  
Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,  
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
The man who loved his life so over-much,  
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
I dare at times imagine to my need  
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
Unlimited in capability  
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:  
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait  
On purpose to make prized the life at large—  
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,  
We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!  
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,  
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die:  
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,  
I cannot tell thy messenger aright

<sup>1</sup> Famous Greek poetess (about 600 B. C.).

<sup>2</sup> First writer of Greek tragedy whose works have survived.

Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,  
 As if his answer could impose at all!  
 He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.  
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves  
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and  
     Christ;  
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
 Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.  
(1855.)

### RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI<sup>1</sup>

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives  
 First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves  
 The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays  
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze  
 By no change of its large calm front of snow.  
 And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,  
 He cannot have perceived, that changes ever  
 At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour  
 To live his life, has parted, one by one,  
 With all a flower's true graces, for the grace  
 Of being but a foolish mimic sun,  
 With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.  
 Men nobly call by many a name the Mount  
 As over many a land of theirs its large  
 Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe  
 Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,  
 Each to its proper praise and own account:  
 Men call the Flower the Sunflower, sportively.

<sup>1</sup> Rudel was a twelfth century Provençal troubadour who fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, though he had never seen her.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look  
Across the waters to this twilight nook,  
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?  
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,  
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device  
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice  
Before its idol. See! These inexpert  
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt  
The woven picture; 'tis a women's skill  
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill  
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed  
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees  
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:  
But, as the flower's concern is not for these  
But solely for the sun, so men applaud  
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here  
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!  
(1842.)

## ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

### I

There they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished!  
Take them, Love, the book and me together:  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

### II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,  
Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil  
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:  
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.  
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.  
Did she live and love it all her lifetime?  
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow

Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—  
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,  
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

## III

You and I would rather read that volume,  
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)  
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,  
 Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—  
 Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,  
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,  
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—  
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

## IV

You and I will never read that volume.  
 Guido Reni,<sup>1</sup> like his own eye's apple  
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.  
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
 Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"  
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

## V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:<sup>2</sup>  
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice,"  
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,  
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded  
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,  
 When, his left hand i' the hair o' the wicked,  
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,  
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,  
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—  
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,  
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—  
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.

<sup>1</sup> Bolognese artist (1575-1642).

<sup>2</sup> Dante relates this episode in his *Uita Nuova*.

Says he—"Certain people of importance"  
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)  
"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."  
Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

## VI

You and I would rather see that angel,  
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

## VII

You and I will never see that picture.  
While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,  
In they broke, those "people of importance":  
We and Bice bear the loss forever.

## VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?  
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not  
Once, and only once, and for one only,  
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language  
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—  
Using nature that's an art to others,  
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.  
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,  
None but would forego his proper dowry,—  
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—  
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,  
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
Once, and only once, and for one only,  
So to be the man and leave the artist,  
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

## IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!  
He who smites the rock<sup>1</sup> and spreads the water,

<sup>1</sup> Moses. See Exodus 17: 1-7; Numbers, 20: 2-11.

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,  
 Even he, the minute makes immortal,  
 Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,  
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.  
 While he smites, how can he but remember,  
 So he smote before, in such a peril,  
 When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help  
 us?"

When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"  
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,  
 Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleas-  
 ant."

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;  
 Thus the doing savors of disrelish;  
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;  
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,  
 Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.  
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,  
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,  
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—  
 "How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"  
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—  
 "Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

## X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!  
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's<sup>1</sup> cloven brilliance,  
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.  
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

## XI

Did he love one face from out the thousands,  
 (Where she Jethro's daughter,<sup>2</sup> white and wifely,  
 Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,<sup>3</sup>)  
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,  
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 19: 9, 16; 34: 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Moses's wife.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 12: 1

Meant to save his own life in the desert;  
Ready in the desert to deliver  
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

## XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,  
Make you music that should all-express me;  
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.  
This of verse alone, one life allows me;  
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
Other heights in other lives, God willing:  
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

## XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—  
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.  
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
Lines I write the first time and the last time.  
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,  
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,  
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,  
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.  
He who blows through bronze, may breathe through  
    silver,  
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.  
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

## XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy.  
Enter each and all, and use their service,  
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.  
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,  
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.  
Let me speak this once in my true person,

Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,  
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:  
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,  
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!  
 Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

## XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!  
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,  
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.  
 Curving on a sky imbrued with color,  
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,  
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.  
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,  
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,  
 Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,  
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,  
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

## XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?  
 Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,  
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),  
 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),  
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—  
 Blank to Zoroaster<sup>1</sup> on his terrace,  
 Blind to Galileo<sup>2</sup> on his turret,  
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!  
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—  
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
 Opens out anew for worse or better!  
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg  
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,

<sup>1</sup> One of the greatest religious teachers of the East.

<sup>2</sup> Famous Italian astronomer.



Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?  
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire  
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?  
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu<sup>1</sup>  
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,  
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.  
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,  
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

## XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.  
Only this is sure—the sight were other,  
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,  
Dying now impoverished here in London.  
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,  
One to show a woman when he loves her!

## XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!  
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,  
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!  
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—  
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
But the best is when I glide from out them,  
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
Come out on the other side, the novel  
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,  
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

(R. B.)  
(1855.)

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 24: 1, 10-11.

ABT VOGLER<sup>1</sup>

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL  
INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION)<sup>2</sup>

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,  
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,  
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solo-  
mon<sup>3</sup> willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,  
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,  
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep  
removed,—  
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable  
Name,  
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he  
loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,  
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to  
raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now  
combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his  
praise!

And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to  
hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,  
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace  
well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent  
minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a  
crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,  
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,  
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—

<sup>1</sup> Bavarian musician (1749-1814).

<sup>2</sup> A compact portable organ called an orchestrion.

<sup>3</sup> According to legends, Solomon owned a seal, engraved with "the ineffable name," which gave him power over good and evil spirits.

Outlined round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)  
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul  
was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match  
man's birth,  
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;  
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach  
the earth,  
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the  
sky:  
Novel splendors burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with  
mine,  
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;  
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,  
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near  
nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and  
glow,  
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,  
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,  
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at  
last;  
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the  
body and gone,  
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth  
their new:  
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;  
And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made  
perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my  
soul,  
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly  
forth,  
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the  
whole,  
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-  
worth:

Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds  
from cause,

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;  
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,  
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,  
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!  
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,  
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound,  
but a star.

Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is naught;  
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:  
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought:  
And there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the  
head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;  
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too  
slow;

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,  
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.  
Never to be again! But many more of the kind

As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?  
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind  
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was,  
shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?  
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!  
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?  
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power  
expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as  
before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;  
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good  
more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor  
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist  
 When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.  
 The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
 The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
 Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
 Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence  
 For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agon-  
 ized?  
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might  
 issue thence?  
 Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be  
 prized?  
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,  
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:  
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;  
 The rest may reason and welcome: 't is we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:  
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.  
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,  
 Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,—yes,  
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,  
 Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;  
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is  
 found,  
 The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.  
(1864.)

### RABBI BEN EZRA<sup>1</sup>

Grow old along with me!  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made:  
 Our times are in his hand  
 Who saith, "A whole I planned,  
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

<sup>1</sup> Jewish philosopher, scholar, and writer (1092-1167).

Not that, amassing flowers,  
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,  
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"  
Not that, admiring stars,  
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;  
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them  
all!"

Not for such hopes and fears  
Annulling youth's brief years,  
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!  
Rather I prize the doubt  
Low kinds exist without,  
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men;  
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed  
beast?

Rejoice we are allied  
To that which doth provide  
And not partake, effect and not receive!  
A spark disturbs our clod;  
Nearer we hold of God  
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox  
Which comforts while it mocks,—  
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
What I aspired to be,  
And was not, comforts me:  
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute  
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,  
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?  
To man, propose this test—  
Thy body at its best,  
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:  
I own the Past profuse  
Of power each side, perfection every turn:  
Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
Brain treasured up the whole;  
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?

Not once beat "Praise be thine!  
I see the whole design,  
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:  
Perfect I call thy plan:  
Thanks that I was a man!  
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;  
Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
Pulled e'er to the earth, still yearns for rest;  
Would we some prize might hold  
To match those manifold  
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,  
"Spite of this flesh to-day  
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"  
As the bird wings and sings,  
Let us cry, "All good things  
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps  
soul!"

Therefore I summon age  
To grant youth's heritage,  
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:  
Thence shall I pass, approved  
A man, for aye removed  
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon  
Take rest, ere I be gone  
Once more on my adventure brave and new:  
Fearless and unperplexed,  
When I wage battle next,  
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try  
My gain or loss thereby;  
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:  
And I shall weigh the same,  
Give life its praise or blame:  
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,  
A certain moment cuts  
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:  
A whisper from the west  
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,  
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,  
Though lifted o'er its strife,  
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
"This rage was right i' the main,  
That acquiescence vain:  
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved  
To man, with soul just nerved  
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:  
Here, work enough to watch  
The Master work, and catch  
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth  
Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
Toward making, then repose on aught found made:  
So, better, age, exempt  
From strife, should know, than tempt  
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!



Enough now, if the Right  
And Good and Infinite  
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,  
With knowledge absolute,  
Subject to no dispute  
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,  
Severed great minds from small,  
Announced to each his station in the Past!  
Was I, the world arraigned,  
Were they, my soul disdained,  
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?  
Ten men love what I hate,  
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;  
Ten, who in ears and eyes  
Match me: we all surmise,  
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,<sup>1</sup>  
 That metaphor! and feel  
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—  
 Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round,  
 "Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:  
 What entered into thee,  
*That* was, is, and shall be:  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press?  
 What though, about thy rim,  
 Skull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips aglow!  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with  
 earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,  
 Thee, God, who moulded men;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
 Did I—to the wheel of life  
 With shapes and colors rife,  
 Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy thirst:

<sup>1</sup> See Isaiah 64: 8; Jeremiah 18:2-6; and Fitzgerald's rendering of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*.

So, take and use thy work:  
Amend what flaws may lurk,  
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!  
My times be in thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!  
(1864.)

### A DEATH IN THE DESERT

[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene:  
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,  
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek  
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu*:  
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,  
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,  
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *Xi*,  
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace:  
*Mu* and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.  
I may not write it, but I make a cross  
To show I wait His coming, with the rest,  
And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax.]

I said, "If one should wet his lips with wine,  
And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,  
Or else the lappet of a linen robe,  
Into the water-vessel, lay it right,  
And cool his forehead just above the eyes,  
The while a brother, kneeling either side,  
Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,—  
He is not so far gone but he might speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,  
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock  
Where, sixty days since the decree was out,  
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,  
And waited for his dying all the while;  
But in the midmost grotto: since noon's light  
Reached there a little, and we would not lose  
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,  
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,  
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,  
And laid him in the light where we might see:  
For certain smiles began about his mouth,  
And his lids moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o' the cave,  
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,  
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat  
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,  
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive:  
So that if any thief or soldier passed,  
(Because the persecution was aware)  
Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,  
Such man might pass on, joyful at a prize,  
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.  
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—dropped a drop;  
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,  
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left:  
But Valens had bethought him, and produced  
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.  
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn  
And smile a little, as a sleeper does  
If any dear one call him, touch his face—  
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.  
Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:  
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,  
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,  
Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,  
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead  
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,  
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,  
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,  
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,  
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;  
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:  
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry  
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,  
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, "If a friend declared to me,  
This my son Valens, this my other son,  
Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well  
This lad was very John,—I could believe!  
—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:  
So is myself withdrawn into my depths,  
The soul retreated from the perished brain  
Whence it was wont to feel and use the world  
Through these dull members, done with long ago.  
Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:  
And there is nothing lost. . Let be, awhile!"

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,  
How divers persons witness in each man,  
Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,  
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,  
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,  
And has the use of earth, and ends the man  
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,  
Grows into, and again is grown into  
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,  
Useth the first with its collected use,  
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows:  
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,  
Grows into, and again is grown into  
By the last soul, that uses both the first,  
Subsisting whether they assist or no,  
And, constituting man's self, is what Is—  
And leans upon the former, makes it play,  
As that played off the first: and, tending up,  
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man  
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,  
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.  
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man.  
I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end to end;  
Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!  
Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself  
A little where the fire was: thus I urge  
The soul that served me, till it task once more  
What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,  
And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,  
Trying to taste again the truth of things—"   
(He smiled)—"their very superficial truth;  
As that ye are my sons, that it is long  
Since James and Peter had release by death,  
And I am only he, your brother John,  
Who saw and heard, and could remember all.  
Remember all! It is not much to say.  
What if the truth broke on me from above  
As once and oft-times? Such might hap again:  
Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,  
With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass,  
The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—  
I who now shudder only and surmise  
'How did your brother bear that sight and live?'

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love  
Through me to men: be nought but ashes here  
That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—  
Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth  
No one alive who knew (consider this!)  
—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands  
That which was from the first, the Word of Life.  
How will it be when none more saith 'I saw'?"

"Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.  
Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden teach,  
I went, for many years, about the world,  
Saying 'It was so; so I heard and saw,'  
Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.  
Afterward came the message to myself  
In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,  
But simply listen, take a book and write,  
Nor set down other than the given word,  
With nothing left to my arbitrament  
To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.

Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,  
No call to write again, I found a way,  
And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught  
Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe;  
Or I would pen a letter to a friend  
And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:  
Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.  
But at the last, why, I seemed left alive  
Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,  
To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared  
When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things;  
Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I knew,'  
And go all over the old ground again,  
With Antichrist already in the world,  
And many Antichrists, who answered prompt  
'Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?  
Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget:  
Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?'  
I never thought to call down fire on such,  
Or, as in wonderful and early days,  
Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;  
But patient stated much of the Lord's life  
Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:  
Since much that at the first, in deed and word,  
Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,  
Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,  
Fed through such years, familiar with such light,  
Guarded and guided still to see and speak)  
Of new significance and fresh result;  
What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,  
And named them in the Gospel I have writ.  
For men said, 'It is getting long ago:  
Where is the promise of His coming?'—asked  
These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,  
Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.  
I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,  
Since I was there, and helpful in my age;  
And, in the main, I think such men believed.  
Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,  
Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,  
And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,  
Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,

We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.  
 Yet now I wake in such decrepitude  
 As I had slidden down and fallen afar,  
 Past even the presence of my former self,  
 Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,  
 Till I am found away from my own world,  
 Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,  
 Along with unborn people in strange lands,  
 Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—  
 ‘Was John at all, and did he say he saw?’  
 Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!’

“And how shall I assure them? Can they share  
 —They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength  
 About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,  
 Living and learning still as years assist  
 Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—  
 With me who hardly am withheld at all,  
 But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,  
 Lie bare to the universal prick of light?  
 Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,  
 We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.  
 To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death  
 Of which I wrote ‘it was’—to me, it is;  
 —Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.  
 Is not God now i’ the world His power first made?  
 Is not His love at issue still with sin,  
 Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?  
 Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?  
 Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise  
 To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,  
 When such truth, breaking bounds, o’erfloods my soul,  
 And, as I saw the sin and death, even so  
 See I the need yet transiency of both,  
 The good and glory consummated thence?  
 I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,  
 Resume the Power: and in this word ‘I see,’  
 Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both  
 That moving o’er the spirit of man, unblinds  
 His eye and bids him look. These are, I see;  
 But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,  
 Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass



I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,  
It had been given a crafty smith to make;  
A tube, he turned on objects brought too close,  
Lying confusedly insubordinate  
For the unassisted eye to master once:  
Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,  
Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear!  
Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth  
I see, reduced to plain historic fact,  
Diminished into clearness, proved a point  
And far away: ye would withdraw your sense  
From out eternity, strain it upon time,  
Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,  
Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,  
As though a star should open out, all sides,  
Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

“For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,  
And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—  
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,  
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;  
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost  
Such prize despite the envy of the world,  
And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.  
But see the double way wherein we are led,  
How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!  
With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,  
And yields mere basement for the soul's emprise,  
Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,  
And warmth was cherishing and food was choice  
To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,  
As now to yours and mine; the body sprang  
At once to the height, and stayed: but the soul,—no!  
Since sages who, this noontide, meditate  
In Rome or Athens, may descry some point  
Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;  
And, as thereby the power's whole mass extends,  
So much extends the æther floating o'er,  
The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.  
Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these  
Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,  
So duly, daily, needs provision be

For keeping the soul's prowess possible,  
Building new barriers as the old decay,  
Saving us from evasion of life's proof,  
Putting the question ever, 'Does God love,  
And will ye hold that truth against the world?'  
Ye know there needs no second proof with good  
Gained for our flesh from any earthly source:  
We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,  
Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,  
And guard it safe through every chance, ye know!  
That fable of Prometheus and his theft,  
How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower, grows old  
(I have been used to hear the pagans own)  
And out of mind; but fire, how'er its birth,  
Here is it, precious to the sophist now  
Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,  
As precious to those satyrs of his play,  
Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.  
While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth  
Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure  
To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—  
Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth  
Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,  
Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire  
For gold or purple once he knows its worth?  
Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?  
Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,  
Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,  
And straightway in his life acknowledge it,  
As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.  
Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than now'?  
To give you answer I am left alive;  
Look at me who was present from the first!  
Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,  
My first, befitting me who so had seen:  
'Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him  
Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?  
What should wring this from thee!'—ye laugh and ask.  
What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,  
The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,  
And fear of what the Jews might do! Just that,  
And it is written, 'I forsook and fled.'

There was my trial, and it ended thus.  
Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:  
Another year or two,—what little child,  
What tender woman that had seen no least  
Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,  
Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,  
Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?  
Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.  
Already had begun the silent work  
Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,  
Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt.  
Teachers were busy, whispering 'All is true  
As the aged ones report; but youth can reach  
Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,  
And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'  
Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,  
A bar to me who touched and handled truth,  
Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,  
This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,  
Till imminent was the outcry 'Save our Christ!'  
Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life  
Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.  
Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?  
What do I hear say, or conceive men say,  
'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?'  
Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!

Is this indeed a burthen for late days,  
And may I help to bear it with you all,  
Using my weakness which becomes your strength?  
For if a babe were born inside this grot,  
Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,  
Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place,—  
One loving him and wishful he should learn,  
Would much rejoice himself was blinded first  
Month by month here, so made to understand  
How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:  
I think I could explain to such a child  
There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,  
Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe!'  
It is a heavy burthen you shall bear

In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,  
Left without me, which must be very soon.  
What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!  
I see you stand conversing, each new face,  
Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,  
On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;  
Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico  
Out of the crowd in some enormous town  
Where now the larks sing in a solitude;  
Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand  
Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:  
And no one asks his fellow any more  
'Where is the promise of His coming?' but  
'Was he revealed in any of His lives,  
As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul?'

"Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,  
And let us ask and answer and be saved!  
My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;  
One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads  
'Here is a tale of things done ages since;  
What truth was ever told the second day?  
Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.  
Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love,  
And what we love most, power and love in one,  
Let us acknowledge on the record here,  
Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?  
Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?  
Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.  
First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ—  
A proof we comprehend His love, a proof  
We had such love already in ourselves,  
Knew first what else we should not recognize.  
'Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,  
And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,  
Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;  
He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's,  
With shape, name, story added, man's old way.  
How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?  
Next try the power: He made and rules the world:  
Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,  
Unless things have been ever as we see.

Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds  
Brought the sun up the east and down the west,  
Which only of itself now rises, sets,  
As if a hand impelled it and a will,—  
Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands:  
But the new question's whisper is distinct,  
Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?  
We have the hands, the will; what made and drives  
The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,  
While will and love we do know; marks of these,  
Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—  
As that, to punish or reward our race,  
The sun at undue times arose or set  
Or else stood still: what do not men affirm?  
But earth requires as urgently reward  
Or punishment to-day as years ago,  
And none expects the sun will interpose:  
Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,  
Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.  
Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;  
Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,  
Man's!—which he gives, supposing he but finds,  
As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,  
To help these in what forms he called his gods.  
First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,  
But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long;  
At last, will, power, and love discarded these,  
So law in turn discards power, love, and will.  
What proveth God is otherwise at least?  
All else, projection from the mind of man!

“Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,  
But place my gospel where I put my hands.

“I say that man was made to grow, not stop;  
That help, he needed once, and needs no more,  
Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:  
For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.  
This imports solely, man should mount on each  
New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,  
The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,  
Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.

Man apprehends Him newly at each stage  
 Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;  
 And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.  
 You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs  
 To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,  
 And check the careless step would spoil their birth;  
 But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,  
 Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,  
 It is no longer for old twigs ye look,  
 Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,  
 But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,  
 For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,  
 Nor miracles need prove it any more.  
 Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware  
 At first of root and stem, saved both till now  
 From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.  
 What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,  
 And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?  
 No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er forgets:  
 May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

"This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

"I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,  
 Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,  
 So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:  
 When they can eat, babe's-nurture is withdrawn.  
 I fed the babe whether it would or no:  
 I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.  
 I cried once, 'That ye may believe in Christ,  
 Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!'  
 I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*  
*And smile at stories how John's word could cure—*  
*Repeat that miracle and take my faith?'*  
 I say, that miracle was duly wrought  
 When, save for it, no faith was possible.  
 Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,  
 Whether the change came from our minds which see  
 Of shows o' the world so much as and no more  
 Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I  
 See now, suppose you, there where you see rock  
 Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,

So faith grew, making void more miracles  
Because too much: they would compel, not help.  
I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ  
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
All questions in the earth and out of it,  
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.  
Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?  
In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,  
Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?  
Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!

“For I say, this is death and the sole death,  
When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,  
Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,  
And lack of love from love made manifest;  
A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;  
A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.  
With ignorance was surety of a cure.  
When man, appalled at nature, questioned first  
‘What if there lurk a might behind this might?’  
He needed satisfaction God could give,  
And did give, as ye have the written word:  
But when he finds might still redouble might,  
Yet asks, ‘Since all is might, what use of will?’  
—Will, the one source of might,—he being man  
With a man's will and a man's might, to teach  
In little how the two combine in large,—  
That man has turned round on himself and stands,  
Which in the course of nature is, to die.

“And when man questioned, ‘What if there be love  
Behind the will and might, as real as they?’—  
He needed satisfaction God could give,  
And did give, as ye have the written word:  
But when, beholding that love everywhere,  
He reasons, ‘Since such love is everywhere,  
And since ourselves can love and would be loved,  
We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,’—  
How shall ye help this man who knows himself,  
That he must love and would be loved again,  
Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,  
Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?

The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags  
Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

"If he rejoin, 'But this was all the while  
A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,  
Thy story of the places, names and dates,  
Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,  
—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,  
Whence now the second suffers detriment.  
What good of giving knowledge if, because  
O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?  
And why refuse what modicum of help  
Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible  
I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?  
Why must I hit of this and miss of that,  
Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,  
And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,  
Was this once, was it not once?—then and now  
And evermore, plain truth from man to man.  
Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?  
Put the question of his famous play again  
How for the ephemerals' sake Jove's fire was filched,  
And carried in a cane and brought to earth:  
*The fact is in the fable, cry the wise,  
Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,  
Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.*  
As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:  
Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,  
Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?'

"I answer, Have ye yet to argue out  
The very primal thesis, plainest law,  
—Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,  
A master to obey, a course to take,  
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?  
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,  
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,  
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.  
How could man have progression otherwise?  
Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'  
No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'  
Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'



Man takes that title now if he believes  
Might can exist with neither will nor love,  
In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—  
While in himself he recognizes love  
No less than might and will: and rightly takes.  
Since if man prove the sole existent thing  
Where these combine, whatever their degree,  
However weak the might or will or love,  
So they be found there, put in evidence,—  
He is as surely higher in the scale  
Than any might with neither love nor will,  
As life, apparent in the poorest midge,  
(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)  
Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self—  
Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!  
Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,  
And thus the victory leads but to defeat,  
The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,  
His life becomes impossible, which is death.

“But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch  
He is mere man, and in humility  
Neither may know God nor mistake himself;  
I point to the immediate consequence  
And say, by such confession straight he falls  
Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,  
Made to know that he can know and not more:  
Lower than God who knows all and can all,  
Higher than beasts which know and can so far  
As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,  
Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;  
While man knows partly but conceives beside,  
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,  
And in this striving, this converting air  
Into a solid he may grasp and use,  
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,  
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,  
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.  
Such progress could no more attend his soul  
Were all it struggles after found at first  
And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,  
Than motion wait his body, were all else

Than it the solid earth on every side,  
Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.  
Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect  
He could not, what he knows now, know at first;  
What he considers that he knows to-day,  
Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;  
Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns  
Because he lives, which is to be a man,  
Set to instruct himself by his past self:  
First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,  
Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,  
Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.  
God's gift was that man should conceive of truth  
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,  
As midway help till he reach fact indeed.  
The statuary ere he mould a shape  
Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next  
The aspiration to produce the same;  
So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,  
Cries ever 'Now I have the thing I see':  
Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,  
From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.  
How were it had he cried 'I see no face,  
No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay'?  
Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,  
And laughed 'It is my shape and lives again!'  
Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,  
Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed  
In what is still flesh-imitating clay.  
Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!  
God only makes the live shape at a jet.  
Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?  
The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,  
Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;  
But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,  
Serve still and are replaced as time requires:  
By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!  
If ye demur, this judgment on your head,  
Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,  
Indulging every instinct of the soul  
There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

"Such is the burthen of the latest time.  
I have survived to hear it with my ears,  
Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?  
For if there be a further woe than such,  
Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,  
So long as any pulse is left in mine,  
May I be absent even longer yet,  
Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,  
Though I should tarry a new hundred years!"

But he was dead; 'twas about noon, the day  
Somewhat declining: we five buried him  
That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,  
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.  
Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;  
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,  
And could not write nor speak, but only loved:  
So, lest the memory of this go quite,  
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,  
I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!  
For many look again to find that face,  
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,  
Somewhere in life about the world; they err:  
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke  
At ending of his book, as he relates,  
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech  
Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.  
Believe ye will not see him any more  
About the world with his divine regard!  
For all was as I say, and now the man  
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

---

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

"If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men  
Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—  
Account Him, for reward of what He was,  
Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.  
For see; Himself conceived of life as love.

Conceived of love as what must enter in,  
 Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved:  
 Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.  
 Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.  
 But by this time are many souls set free,  
 And very many still retained alive:  
 Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,  
 Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)  
 See if, for every finger of thy hands,  
 There be not found, that day the world shall end,  
 Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word  
 That He will grow incorporate with all,  
 With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,  
 Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?  
 Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.  
 Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,  
 Or lost!"

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]  
 (1864.)

### CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS;<sup>1</sup> OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."<sup>2</sup>

[ 'Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,  
 Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,  
 With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.  
 And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,  
 And feels about his spine small eft-things course,  
 Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:  
 And while above his head a pompion-plant,  
 Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,  
 Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,  
 And now a flower drops with a bee inside,  
 And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—  
 He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross

<sup>1</sup> In the *Dramatis Personæ* of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Caliban is described as "a savage and deformed slave." Setebos is referred to as the god his mother worships.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 50: 21.

And recross till they weave a spider-web  
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)  
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,  
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.  
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,  
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,  
When talk is safer than in winter-time.  
Moreover Prosper<sup>3</sup> and Miranda<sup>3</sup> sleep  
In confidence he drudges at their task,  
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,  
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!  
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,  
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;  
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:  
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,  
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:  
He hated that He cannot change His cold,  
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish  
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,  
And thaw herself within the luke warm brine  
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,  
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;  
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse  
At the other kind of water, not her life,  
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)  
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,  
And in her old bounds buried her despair,  
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,  
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.  
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;  
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,  
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown  
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye

• Characters in *The Tempest*.

By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue  
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,  
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,  
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves  
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks  
About their hole—He made all these and more  
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?  
He could not, Himself, make a second self  
To be His mate; as well have made Himself:  
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,  
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:  
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,  
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—  
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,  
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,  
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.  
Because, so brave, so better though they be,  
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.  
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,  
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,  
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—  
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,  
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;  
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,  
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.  
Put case, unable to be what I wish,  
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:  
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban  
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,  
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,  
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,  
There, and I will that he begin to live,  
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns  
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,  
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.  
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,  
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;  
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,  
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,  
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—  
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else  
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,

And give the mankin three sound legs for one,  
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,  
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.  
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,  
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,  
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,  
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.  
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs  
That march now from the mountain to the sea;  
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,  
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.  
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots  
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;  
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,  
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;  
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,  
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,  
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!  
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,  
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more  
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?  
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,  
And must submit: what other use in things?  
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder joint  
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay  
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:  
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay  
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:  
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth  
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,  
I make the cry my maker cannot make  
With his great round mouth; he must blow through  
mine!"  
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?  
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,

What knows,—the something over Setebos  
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,  
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.  
There may be something quiet o'er His head,  
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,  
Since both derive from weakness in some way.  
I joy because the quails come; would not joy  
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:  
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.  
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,  
But never spends much thought nor care that way.  
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those  
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos  
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,  
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,  
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar  
To what is quiet and hath happy life;  
Next looks down here, and out of very spite  
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,  
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.  
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.  
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books  
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:  
Vexed, 'stiched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,  
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;  
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;  
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe  
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;  
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,  
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,  
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,  
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:  
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane  
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;  
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared,  
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,  
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge  
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;  
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.  
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,  
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.



His dam held that the Quiet made all things  
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.  
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.  
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,  
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,  
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,  
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,  
Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport!  
He is the One now: only He doth all.  
'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.  
Ay, himself loves what does him good; but why?  
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast  
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,  
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate  
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.  
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,  
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,  
By no means for the love of what is worked.  
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world  
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,  
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,  
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.  
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,  
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,  
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,  
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,  
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,  
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.  
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;  
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!  
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.  
He hath a spite against me, that I know,  
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?  
So it is, all the same, as well I find.  
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm  
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises  
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,  
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,  
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,  
And licked the whole labour flat; so much for spite.

'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)  
 Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:  
 Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!  
 'Dug up a newt He may have envied once  
 And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.  
 Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?  
 Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!  
 There is the sport: discover how or die!  
 All need not die, for of the things o' the isle  
 Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;  
 Those at His mercy,—why, they please Him most  
 When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way  
 twice!

Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.  
 You must not know His ways, and play Him off,  
 Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:  
 'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears  
 But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,  
 And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:  
 'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,  
 Curls up into a ball, pretending death  
 For fright at my approach: the two ways please.  
 But what would move my choler more than this,  
 That either creature counted on its life  
 To-morrow and next day and all days to come,  
 Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,  
 "Because he did so yesterday with me,  
 And otherwise with such another brute,  
 So must he do henceforth and always."—Ay?  
 Would teach the reasoning couple what "must" means!  
 'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,  
 And we shall have to live in fear of Him  
 So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,  
 If He have done His best, make no new world  
 To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—  
 If He surprise not even the Quiet's self  
 Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow into it  
 As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,  
 And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.  
His dam held different, that after death  
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:  
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,  
Giving just respite lest we die through pain,  
Saving last pain for worst,—with which, an end.  
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire  
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,  
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,  
Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills both.  
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball  
On head and tail as if to save their lives:  
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose  
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,  
And always, above all else, envies Him;  
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,  
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,  
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:  
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,  
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"  
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,  
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,  
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,  
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:  
While myself lit a fire, and made a song  
And sung it, "*What I hate, be consecrate  
To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate  
For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?*"  
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,  
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,  
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch  
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He  
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

---

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!  
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,  
There scuds His raven that has told Him all!  
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind

Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,  
 And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—  
 A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,  
 His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!  
 Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!  
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,  
 Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month  
 One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!]

(1864.)

## CONFESSIONS

What is the buzzing in my ears?  
 "Now that I come to die,  
 Do I view the world as a vale of tears?"  
 Ah, reverend sir, not I!

What I viewed there once, what I view again  
 Where the physic bottles stand  
 On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,  
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,  
 From a house you could descry  
 O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue  
 Or green to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather  
 Blue above lane and wall;  
 And that farthest bottle labelled "Ether"  
 Is the house o'ertopping all.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,  
 There watched for me, one June,  
 A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,  
 My poor mind's out of tune.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept  
 Close by the side to dodge  
 Eyes in the house, two eyes except:  
 They styled their house "The Lodge."

What right had a lounge up their lane?  
But, by creeping very close,  
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain  
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,  
As she left the attic, there,  
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether,"  
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,  
We loved, sir—used to meet:  
How sad and bad and mad it was—  
But then, how it was sweet!

(1864.)

## MAY AND DEATH

I wish that when you died last May,  
Charles, there had died along with you  
Three parts of spring's delightful things;  
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!  
There must be many a pair of friends  
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm  
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

So, for their sake, be May still May!  
Let their new time, as mine of old,  
Do all it did for me: I bid  
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

Only, one little sight, one plant,  
Woods have in May, that starts up green  
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,  
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

That, they might spare; a certain wood  
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:  
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,  
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

(1864.)

PROSPICE<sup>1</sup>

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
 The mist in my face,  
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
 I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
 The post of the foe;  
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
 Yet the strong man must go:  
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
 And the barriers fall,  
 Through a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
 The reward of it all.  
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
 The best and the last!  
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,  
 And bade me creep past.  
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
 The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
 Of pain, darkness and cold.  
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
 The black minute's at end,  
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,  
 Then a light, then thy breast,  
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
 And with God be the rest!

(1864.)

## YOUTH AND ART

It once might have been, once only:  
 We lodged in a street together,  
 You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,  
 I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

<sup>1</sup> Look forward.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,  
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,  
Then laughed "They will see some day  
Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

My business was song, song, song;  
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,  
"Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,  
And Grisi's existence embittered!"

I earned no more by a warble  
Than you by a sketch in plaster;  
You wanted a piece of marble,  
I needed a music master.

We studied hard in our styles,  
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,  
For air, looked out on the tiles,  
For fun, watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,  
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;  
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth  
With fingers the clay adhered to.

And I—soon managed to find  
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,  
Was forced to put up a blind  
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault  
If you never turned your eyes' tail up  
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,  
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,  
And the boys and girls gave guesses,  
And stalls in our street looked rare  
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower  
In a pellet of clay and fling it?  
Why did not I put a power  
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,  
 (And yet the memory rankles,)  
 When models arrived, some minx  
 Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!  
 "That foreign fellow,—who can know  
 How she pays, in a playful mood,  
 For his tuning her that piano?"

Could you say so, and never say,  
 "Suppose we join hands and fortunes,  
 And I fetch her from over the way,  
 Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes'?"

No, no: you would not be rash,  
 Nor I rasher and something over:  
 You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,  
 And Grisi yet lives in clover.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,  
 I'm queen myself at *bals-pare*,<sup>1</sup>  
 I've married a rich old lord,  
 And you're dubbed knight and an R. A.<sup>2</sup>

Each life unfulfilled, you see;  
 It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:  
 We have not sighed deep, laughed free,  
 Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,  
 And people suppose me clever:  
 This could but have happened once,  
 And we missed it, lost it forever.

(1864.)

<sup>1</sup> Fancy dress balls.

<sup>2</sup> Member of the Royal Academy.



## A FACE

If one could have that little head of hers  
 Painted upon a blackground of pale gold,  
 Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!  
 No shade encroaching on the matchless mould  
 Of those two lips, which should be opening soft  
 In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,  
 For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft  
 Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's  
 Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss  
 And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.  
 Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,  
 How it should waver on the pale gold ground  
 Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!  
 I know, Correggio<sup>1</sup> loves to mass, in rifts  
 Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb  
 Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:  
 But these are only massed there, I should think,  
 Waiting to see some wonder momentarily  
 Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky  
 (That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),  
 All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye  
 Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.  
(1864.)

## APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."—*Paris Newspaper*  
 No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,  
 I passed through Paris, stopped a day  
 To see the baptism of your Prince;<sup>2</sup>  
 Saw, made my bow, and went my way:  
 Walking the heat and headache off,  
 I took the Seine-side, you surmise,  
 Thought of the Congress,<sup>3</sup> Gortschakoff,

<sup>1</sup> Name of the birthplace of Antonio Allegri (1494-1534), celebrated Italian painter, by which he is commonly called.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Napoleon, son of Napoleon III, born 1856.

<sup>3</sup> A Congress of European powers, which met in Paris 1852-1859 to consider the unity and freedom of Italy. Gortschakoff represented Russia; Cavour, Italy; and Buol, Austria.

Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,  
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

Only the Doric little Morgue!

The dead-house where you show your drowned:  
Petrarch's Vaucluse<sup>1</sup> makes proud the Sorgue,

Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.  
One pays one's debt in such a case;

I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,  
Keeping a tolerable face

Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:  
Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

First came the silent gazers; next,

A screen of glass, we're thankful for;

Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,

The three men who did most abhor

Their life in Paris yesterday,

So killed themselves: and now, enthroned

Each on his copper couch, they lay

Fronting me, waiting to be owned.

I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!

The reverence struck me; o'er each head

Religiously was hung its hat,

Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,

Sacred from touch: each had his berth,

His bounds, his proper place of rest,

Who last night tenanted on earth

Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—

Unless the plain asphalt seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy?

You wanted to be Buonaparte

And have the Tuileries<sup>2</sup> for toy,

And could not, so it broke your heart?

<sup>1</sup> The famous Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) at one time lived in the village Vaucluse, where the river Sorgue has its source.

<sup>2</sup> The imperial palace.

You, old one by his side, I judge,  
Were, red as blood, a socialist,  
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge  
You've gained what no Republic missed?  
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this—why, he was red in vain,  
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!  
What fancy was it turned your brain?  
Oh, women were the prize for you!  
Money gets women, cards and dice  
Get money, and ill-luck gets just  
The copper couch and one clear nice  
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,  
The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;  
It's safer being meek than fierce:  
It's fitter being sane than mad.  
My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;  
That, after Last, returns the First,  
Though a wide compass round be fetched;  
That what began best, can't end worst,  
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

(1864.)

## PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR

### AMPHIBIAN

The fancy I had to-day,  
Fancy which turned a fear!  
I swam far out in the bay,  
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

I lay and looked at the sun,  
The noon-sun looked at me:  
Between us two, no one  
Live creature, that I could see.

Yes! There came floating by  
Me, who lay floating too,  
Such a strange butterfly!  
Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings  
So wonderful, so wide,  
So sun-suffused, were things  
Like soul and naught beside.

A handbreadth overhead!  
All of the sea my own,  
It owned the sky instead;  
Both of us were alone.

I never shall join its flight,  
For, naught buoys flesh in air.  
If it touch the sea—good night!  
Death sure and swift waits there.

Can the insect feel the better  
For watching the uncouth play  
Of limbs that slip the fetter,  
Pretend as they were not clay?

Undoubtedly I rejoice  
That the air comports so well  
With a creature which had the choice  
Of the land once. Who can tell?

What if a certain soul  
Which early slipped its sheath,  
And has for its home the whole  
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

Thus watch one who, in the world,  
Both lives and likes life's way,  
Nor wishes the wings unfurled  
That sleep in the worm, they say?

But sometimes when the weather  
Is blue, and warm waves tempt  
To free one's self of tether,  
And try a life exempt

From wordly noise and dust,  
In the sphere which overbrims  
With passion and thought,—why, just  
Unable to fly, one swims!

By passion and thought upborne,  
One smiles to one's self—"They fare  
Scarce better, they need not scorn  
Our sea, who live in the air!"

Emancipate through passion  
And thought, with sea for sky,  
We substitute, in a fashion,  
For heaven—poetry:

Which sea, to all intent,  
Gives flesh such noon-disport  
As a finer element  
Affords the spirit-sort.

Whatever they are, we seem:  
Imagine the thing they know;  
All deeds they do, we dream;  
Can heaven be else but so?

And meantime, yonder streak  
Meets the horizon's verge;  
That is the land, to seek  
If we tire or dread the surge:

Land the solid and safe—  
To welcome again (confess!)  
When, high and dry, we chafe  
The body, and don the dress.

Does she look, pity, wonder  
At one who mimics flight,  
Swims—heaven above, sea under,  
Yet always earth in sight?

(1872.)

## EPILOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR

## THE HOUSEHOLDER

Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone:

Dreary, weary with the long day's work:

Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:

Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk;

When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,

Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we!—

“What, and is it really you again?” quoth I:

“I again, what else did you expect?” quoth She.

“Never mind, hie away from this old house—

Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame!

Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse!

Let them—every devil of the night—lay claim,

Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me! Good-by!

God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,

Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap!” quoth I:

“Nay, but there's a decency required!” quoth She.

“Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights!

All the neighbor-talk with man and maid—such men!

All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:

All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof; and then,

All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try

Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?

If you knew but how I dwelt down here!” quoth I:

“And was I so better off up there?” quoth She.

“Help and get it over! *Reunited to his wife*

(How draw up the paper lets the parish people know?)

*Lies M. or N., departed from this life,*

*Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.*

What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!

*Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?*

*Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!”* quoth I:

“I end with—Love is all, and Death is nought!” quoth She.

(1872).

## HOUSE

Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?

Do I live in a house you would like to see?  
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?

“Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?”

Invite the world, as my betters have done?

“Take notice: this building remains on view,  
Its suites of reception every one,  
Its private apartment and bedroom too;

“For a ticket, apply to the Publisher.”

No: thanking the public, I must decline.  
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;  
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk

In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced  
And a house stood gaping, naught to balk  
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,

The inside gaped: exposed to day,  
Right and wrong and common and queer,  
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!

“Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!  
What a parcel of musty old books about!  
He smoked,—no wonder he lost his health!

“I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.

A brasier?—the pagan, he burned perfumes!  
You see it is proved, what the neighbors guessed:  
His wife and himself had separate rooms.”

Friends, the good man of the house at least

Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:  
’T is the fall of its frontage permits you feast  
On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

Outside should suffice for evidence:  
 And whoso desires to penetrate  
 Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—  
 No optics like yours, at any rate!

“Hoity-toity! A street to explore,  
 Your house the exception! ‘*With this same key  
 Shakespeare unlocked his heart!*,’<sup>1</sup>—Once more!”  
 Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!  
 (1876.)

<sup>1</sup> A quotation, slightly changed, from Wordsworth’s sonnet, *Scorn not the Sonnet*.

## FEARS AND SCRUPLES

Here’s my case. Of old I used to love him,  
 This same unseen friend, before I knew:  
 Dream there was none like him, none above him,—  
 Wake to hope and trust my dream was true.

Loved I not his letters full of beauty?  
 Not his actions famous far and wide?  
 Absent, he would know I vowed him duty;  
 Present, he would find me at his side.

Pleasant fancy! for I had but letters,  
 Only knew of actions by hearsay:  
 He himself was busied with my betters;  
 What of that? My turn must come some day.

“Some day” proving—no day! Here’s the puzzle.  
 Passed and passed my turn is. Why complain?  
 He’s so busied! If I could but muzzle  
 People’s foolish mouths that give me pain!

“Letters?” (hear them!) “You a judge of writing?  
 Ask the experts! How they shake the head  
 O’er these characters, your friend’s inditing—  
 Call them forgery from A to Z!



"Actions? Where's your certain proof" (they bother)  
"He, of all you find so great and good,  
He, he only, claims this, that, the other  
Action—claimed by men, a multitude?"

I can simply wish I might refute you,  
Wish my friend would,—by a word, a wink,—  
Bid me stop that foolish mouth,—you brute you!  
He keeps absent,—why, I cannot think.

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me,  
One thing's sure enough: 't is neither frost,  
No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me  
Thanks for truth—though falsehood, gained—  
though lost.

All my days, I'll go the softlier, sadlier,  
For that dream's sake! How forget the thrill  
Through and through me as I thought "The gladlier  
Lives my friend because I love him still!"

Ah, but there's a menace some one utters!  
"What and if your friend at home play tricks?  
Peep at hide-and-seek behind the shutters?  
Mean your eyes should pierce through solid bricks?"

"What and if he, frowning, wake you, dreamy?  
Lay on you the blame that bricks—conceal?  
Say '*At least I saw who did not see me,*  
*Does see now, and presently shall feel*'?"

"Why, that makes your friend a monster!" say you:  
"Had his house no window? At first nod,  
Would you not have hailed him?" Hush, I pray you!  
What if this friend happened to be—God?  
(1876.)

## APPEARANCES

And so you found that poor room dull,  
 Dark, hardly to your taste, my dear?  
 Its features seemed unbeautiful:

But this I know—'t was there, not here,  
 You plighted troth to me, the word  
 Which—ask that poor room how it heard.

And this rich room obtains your praise  
 Unqualified,—so bright, so fair,  
 So all whereat perfection stays?

Ay, but remember—here, not there,  
 The other word was spoken! Ask  
 This rich room how you dropped the mask!

(1876.)

## HERVÉ RIEL

## I

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,  
 Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!  
 And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,  
 Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,  
 Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the Rance,  
 With the English fleet in view.

## II

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full  
 chase:

First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Dam-  
 freville;

Close on him fled, great and small,

Twenty-two good ships in all;

And they signalled to the place

"Help the winners of a race!

Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick—or, quicker  
 still,

Here's the English can and will!"

## III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;  
 "Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?"  
 laughed they:

"Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred  
 and scored,

Shall the 'Formidable' here with her twelve and eighty guns  
 Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,  
 Trust to enter where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,  
 And with flow at full beside?

Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,  
 Not a ship will leave the bay!"

## IV

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate:

"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take  
 in tow

All that's left us of the fleet linked together stern and bow,  
 For a prize to Plymouth Sound?

Better run the ships aground!"

(Ended Damfreville his speech).

"Not a minute more to wait!

Let the Captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!  
 France must undergo her fate."

## V

"Give the word!" But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these  
 —A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate—first, second, third?

No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete!

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the  
 fleet,

A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

## VI

And "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel:

"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disem-bogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's for?

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there's a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this 'Formidable' clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,

—Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life,—here's my head!" cries Hervé Riel.

## VII

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!" cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's  
 profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,  
 How they follow in a flock,  
 Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground  
 Not a spar that comes to grief!  
 The peril, see, is past,  
 All are harbored to the last,  
 And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as fate,  
 Up the English come—too late!

## VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:  
 They see the green trees wave  
 On the heights o'erlooking Grève.  
 Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.  
 "Just our rapture to enhance,  
 Let the English rake the bay,  
 Gnash their teeth and glare askance  
 As they cannonade away!  
 'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"  
 How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!  
 Out burst all with one accord,  
 "This is Paradise for Hell!  
 Let France, let France's King  
 Thank the man that did the thing!"  
 What a shout, and all one word,  
 "Hervé Riel!"  
 As he stepped in front once more,  
 Not a symptom of surprise  
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,  
 Just the same man as before.

## IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,  
 I must speak out at the end,  
 Though I find the speaking hard.  
 Praise is deeper than the lips:  
 You have saved the King his ships,  
 You must name your own reward.  
 'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!

Demand whate'er you will,  
 France remains your debtor still.  
 Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Dam-  
 freville."

## X

Then a beam of fun outbroke  
 On the bearded mouth that spoke,  
 As the honest heart laughed through  
 Those frank eyes of Breton blue:  
 "Since I needs must say my say,  
 Since on board the duty's done,  
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run?—  
 Since 't is ask and have, I may—  
 Since the others go ashore—  
 Come! A good whole holiday!  
 Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"  
 That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

## XI

Name and deed alike are lost:  
 Not a pillar nor a post  
 In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;  
 Not a head in white and black  
 On a single fishing-smack,  
 In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack  
 All that France saved from the fight whence England bore  
 the bell.  
 Go to Paris: rank on rank  
 Search the heroes flung pell-mell  
 On the Louvre, face and flank!  
 You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.  
 So, for better and for worse,  
 Hervé Riel, accept my verse!  
 In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
 Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the Belle  
 Aurore!

(1876.)

## PROLOGUE TO LA SAISIAZ

Good, to forgive;  
Best, to forget!  
Living, we fret;  
Dying, we live.  
Fretless and free,  
Soul, clap thy pinion!  
Earth have dominion,  
Body, o'er thee!

Wander at will,  
Day after day,—  
Wander away,  
Wandering still—  
Soul that canst soar!  
Body may slumber:  
Body shall cumber  
Soul-flight no more.

Waft of soul's wing!  
What lies above?  
Sunshine and Love,  
Skyblue and Spring!  
Body hides—where?  
Ferns of all feather,  
Mosses and heather,  
Yours be the care!

(1878.)

## PROLOGUE TO THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

Such a starved bank of moss  
Till, that May-morn,  
Blue ran the flash across:  
Violets were born!

Sky—what a scowl of cloud  
Till, near and far,  
Ray on ray split the shroud:  
Splendid, a star!

World—how it walled about  
 Life with disgrace  
 Till God's own smile came out:  
 That was thy face!

(1878.)

## PHEIDIPPIDES

*Χαίρετε, νικώμεν.<sup>1</sup>*

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!  
 Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honor to all!  
 Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in  
     praise  
 —Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and  
     spear!<sup>2</sup>  
 Also, ye of the bow and the buskin,<sup>3</sup> praised be your peer,  
 Now, henceforth and forever,—O latest to whom I upraise  
 Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and  
     flock!  
 resent to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!  
 See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!  
 Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and  
     you,  
 “Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta<sup>4</sup> for aid!  
 Persia has come, we are here, where is She?” Your command  
     I obeyed,  
 Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs  
     through,  
 Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights  
     did I burn  
 Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

<sup>1</sup> Rejoice, we conquer.<sup>2</sup> Athena.<sup>3</sup> Apollo and Artemis.<sup>4</sup> About 135 miles from Athens.



Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia has  
come!

Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;  
Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall Athens  
sink,

Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die,  
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid,  
the stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er  
destruction's brink?

How,—when? No care for my limbs!—there's lightning in  
all and some—

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?  
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,  
Malice,—each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!  
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses.

I stood

Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch  
from dry wood:

"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?  
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond  
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them  
'Ye must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!  
"Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,—may Sparta  
befriend?

Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at stake!  
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to  
the gods!

Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds:  
In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to  
take

Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to it.  
fast:

Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment suspend."  
Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had mould-  
ered to ash!

That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I  
back,

—Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and  
the vile!

Yet "O gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and plain,  
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again,  
"Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you  
erewhile?

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash  
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreath  
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,  
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a  
slave!

Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste tract!  
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked  
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave  
No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can breathe,  
Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;  
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar  
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.  
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across:  
"Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the  
fosse?

Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus  
I obey—

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge  
Better!"—when—ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that  
are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan!<sup>1</sup>  
Ivy dropped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his  
hoof:

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly—the curl  
Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,  
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.

<sup>1</sup> The god of all nature.

"Halt, Pheidippides!"—halt I did, my brain of a whirl:  
"Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious  
began:

"How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!  
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful  
of old?

Ay and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!  
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith  
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The Goat-  
God saith:

When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is cast in the  
sea,

Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and  
least,

Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free  
and the bold!

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the  
pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear  
—Fennel—I grasped it a-tremble with dew—whatever it  
bode)

"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was gone.  
If I ran hitherto—

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.  
Parnes to Athens—earth no more, the air was my road:

Here I am back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the  
razor's edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades.<sup>1</sup> "And thee, best runner of Greece,  
Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised thyself?  
Tell it us straightway,—Athens the mother demands of her  
son!"

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length  
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest  
of his strength

<sup>1</sup> Commander of the Greeks at the battle of Marathon.

Into the utterance—"Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou hast  
done  
Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee  
release  
From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!"

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my  
mind!  
Fight I shall,—with our foremost, wherever this fennel may  
grow,—  
Pound—Pan helping us—Persia to dust, and, under the deep,  
Whelm her away forever; and then,—no Athens to save,—  
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—  
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep  
Close to my knees,—recount how the God was awful yet kind,  
Promised their sire reward to the full—rewarding him—sol!"

Unforseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:<sup>1</sup>  
So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!  
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!  
'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung down his  
shield,  
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fennel-  
field<sup>2</sup>  
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs  
through,  
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine through  
clay,  
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute  
Is still "Rejoice!"—his word which brought rejoicing indeed.  
So is Pheidippides happy forever,—the noble strong man  
Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a  
god loved so well;

<sup>1</sup> In 490 B. C. Marathon is about twenty-six miles from Athens.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word for *fennel* is *Marathon*.

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell  
 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,  
 So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute:  
 "Athens is saved!"—Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

(1879.)

## MULÉYKEH

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried "A churl's!"  
 Or haply "God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!"  
 —"Nay," would a friend exclaim, "he needs nor pity nor scorn  
 More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand,  
 picking pearls,  
 —Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead  
 On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night  
 makes morn.

"What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán?  
 They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels  
 the due,  
 Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.  
 God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,  
 'Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,  
 And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and gold!"

"So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn—and right, I say.  
 Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,  
 Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.  
 Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that  
 day.  
 'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we used to call  
 Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hóseyn, I  
 say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?" the stranger replies: "Be  
 sure'  
 On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both  
 On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart

For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.  
A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,  
'For the vulgar—flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize  
apart.'"

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's tent,  
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and "Peace!" bids he.  
"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the  
wrong.

'T is said of your Pearl—the price of a hundred camels spent  
In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from  
me

Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too  
long."

Said Hóseyn, "You feed young beasts a many, of famous  
breed,

Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzennem:  
There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the  
hill.

But I love Muléykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed  
Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels—go gaze  
on them!

Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.

"You are open-hearted, ay—moist-handed, a very prince.

Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!

My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife prompts  
'Fool,

Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder, since  
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on him shows  
thrift.'"

Said Hóseyn, "God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then  
gives

That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted—hold high,  
wave wide

Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is  
left?

The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Muléykeh lives.  
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh died?

It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft?"

Another year, and—hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?  
 He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,  
 But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the  
     trench  
 Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night  
     combines  
 With the robber—and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,  
 Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the  
     wrench.

“He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my  
     store,  
 And a jibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring  
     dew?  
 Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!  
 He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode:  
     nay, more,—  
 For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:  
 I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and  
     son.

“I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash  
 Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,  
 And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:  
 Let him die, then,—let me live! Be bold—but not too rash!  
 I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing  
     while  
 I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not,  
     the spy!

“As he said—there lies in peace Hóseyn—how happy! Beside  
 Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her head-stall about  
     his wrist:  
 'T is therefore he sleeps so sound—the moon through the  
     roof reveals.  
 And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and  
     wide,  
 Buhéyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed  
 The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunperous  
     heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case  
 some thief  
 Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.  
 What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both  
 escape."

Through the skirt fold in glides Duhl,—so a serpent disturbs  
 no leaf

In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through,  
 He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs  
 the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has  
 clipped

The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as  
 before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like bolt  
 from bow.

Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though the  
 heart be ripped,

Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute more,  
 He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth we  
 know!

And Hóseyn—his blood turns flame, he has learned long  
 since to ride,

And Buhéyseh does her part,—they gain—they are gaining  
 fast

On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross and  
 quit,

And to reach the ridge El-Sabán,—no safety till that be spied!  
 And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off at

last,  
 For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch of  
 the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the strange  
 and queer:

Buhéyseh is mad with hope—beat sister she shall and must,  
 Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to  
 thank.

She is near now, nose by tail—they are neck by croup—joy!  
 fear!



What folly makes Hóseyn shout "Dog Duhl, Damned son  
of the Dust,  
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's  
left flank!"

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as prompt  
perceived  
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to  
obey,  
And a leap indeed gave she, and vanished forevermore.  
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,  
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:  
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward, weeping  
sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the ground  
Weeping: and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-Asád  
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his  
grief;  
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had  
wound  
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!  
And how Buhéyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with  
the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is crazed  
past hope!  
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?  
To have simply held the tongue were a task for boy or girl,  
And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,  
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by  
night!"—  
"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn. "You never have  
loved my Pearl."

(1880.)

### WANTING IS—WHAT?

Wanting is—what?  
Summer redundant,  
Blueness abundant,  
—Where is the blot?

Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,

—Framework which waits for a picture to frame?  
 What of the leafage, what of the flower?  
 Roses embowering with naught they embower!  
 Come then, complete incomplection, O comer,  
 Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!  
     Breathe but one breath  
     Rose-beauty above,  
     And all that was death  
     Grows life, grows love,  
     Grows love!

(1883.)

ADAM, LILITH,<sup>1</sup> AND EVE

One day, it thundered and lightened.  
 Two women, fairly frightened,  
 Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,  
 At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;  
 And "Mercy!" cried each—"if I tell the truth  
 Of a passage in my youth!"

Said This: "Do you mind the morning  
 I met your love with scorning?  
 As the worst of the venom left my lips,  
 I thought, 'If, despite this lie, he strips  
 The mask from my soul with a kiss—I crawl  
 His slave,—soul, body, and all!'"

Said that: "We stood to be married;  
 The priest, or some one, tarried;  
 'If Paradise-door prove locked?' smiled you.  
 I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,  
 'Did one, that's away, arrive—nor late  
 Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!'"

It ceased to lighten and thunder.  
 Up started both in wonder,  
 Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,  
 Then laughed "Confess you believed us, Dear!"  
 "I saw through the joke!" the man replied.  
 They re-seated themselves beside.

(1883.)

<sup>1</sup> According to Jewish folk-lore, Adam's first wife, created with him (Genesis 1:27). Eve was created later from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:22).

## NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

Never the time and the place  
 And the loved one all together!  
 This path—how soft to pace!  
 This May—what magic weather!  
 Where is the loved one's face?  
 In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,  
 But the house is narrow, the place is bleak  
 Where, outside, rain and wind combine  
 With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,  
 With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,  
 With a malice that marks each word, each sign!  
 O enemy sly and serpentine,  
 Uncoil thee from the waking man!  
 Do I hold the Past  
 Thus firm and fast  
 Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?  
 This path so soft to pace shall lead  
 Through the magic of May to herself indeed!  
 Or narrow if needs the house must be,  
 Outside are the storms and strangers: we—  
 Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,  
 —I and she!

(1883.)

## SONNET

Eyes, calm beside thee (Lady, could'st thou know!)  
 May turn away thick with fast-gathering tears:  
 I glance not where all gaze: thrilling and low  
 Their passionate praises reach thee—my cheek wears  
 Alone no wonder when thou passest by;  
 Thy tremulous lids, bent and suffused, reply  
 To the irrepressible homage which doth glow  
 On every lip but mine: if in thine ears  
 Their accents linger—and thou dost recall  
 Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,  
 Beside each votarist whose lighted brow  
 Wore worship like an aureole, "O'er them all  
 My beauty," thou wilt murmur, "did prevail  
 Save that one only:"—Lady, could'st thou know!

(1834.)

## BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

## I

"Would a man 'scape the rod?"  
 Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,  
 "See that he turn to God  
 The day before his death."

"Ay, could a man inquire  
 When it shall come!" I say,  
 The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—  
 "Then let him turn to-day!"

## II

Quoth a young Sadducee:  
 "Reader of many rolls,  
 Is it so certain we  
 Have, as they tell us, souls?"

"Son, there is no reply!"  
 The Rabbi bit his beard:  
 "Certain, a soul have I—  
*We* may have none," he sneer'd.

---

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,  
 The Right-hand Temple-column,  
 Taught babes in grace their grammar,  
 And struck the simple, solemn.

(1856.)

## WHY I AM A LIBERAL

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,  
 All that I am now, all I hope to be,—  
 Whence comes it save from fortune setting free  
 Body and soul the purpose to pursue,  
 God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,  
 Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,  
 These shall I bid men—each in his degree  
 Also God-guided—bear, and gayly, too?

But little do or can the best of us:  
That little is achieved through Liberty.  
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,  
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,  
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss  
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."  
(1885.)

## PROLOGUE TO ASOLANDO

"The Poet's age is sad: for why?  
In youth, the natural world could show  
No common object but his eye  
At once involved with alien glow—  
His own soul's iris-bow.

"And now a flower is just a flower:  
Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—  
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower  
Of dyes which, when life's day began,  
Round each in glory ran."

Friend, did you need an optic glass,  
Which were your choice? A lens to drape  
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,  
Each object—or reveal its shape  
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing?—so clear  
That, when you had the chance to gaze,  
You found its inmost self appear  
Through outer seeming—truth ablaze,  
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

How many a year, my Asolo,  
Since—one step just from sea to land—  
I found you, loved yet feared you so—  
For natural objects seemed to stand  
Palpably fire-clothed! No—

No mastery of mine o'er these!

Terror with beauty, like the Bush<sup>1</sup>

Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,

Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!

Silence 't is awe decrees.

And now? The lambent flame is—where?

Lost from the naked world: earth, sky,

Hill, vale, tree, flower,—Italia's rare

O'er-running beauty crowds the eye—

But flame? The bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower—they stand distinct,

Nature to know and name. What then?

A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked

Fancy from fact: see, all's in ken:

Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends

Earth's import, not the eye late dazed.

The Voice said, "Call my works thy friends!

At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?

God is it who transcends."

(1889.)

## ROSNY<sup>2</sup>

Woe, he went galloping into the war,

Clara, Clara!

Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a scar?

Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace

Making for manhood which nowise we mar:

See, while I kiss it, the flush on his face—

Rosny, Rosny!

Light does he laugh: "With your love in my soul"—

(Clara, Clara!)

"How could I other than—sound, safe, and whole—

Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3: 2-6.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Sully (1560-1641), called Rosny from the name of his birthplace.

Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,  
 Who won the race kneels, craves reward at your hand—  
 Rosny, Rosny?"

Ay, but if certain who envied should see!

Clara, Clara,  
 Certain who simper: "The hero for me  
 Hardly of life were so chary as miss  
 Death—death and fame—that's love's guerdon when She  
 Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on this  
 Rosny, Rosny!"

So,—go on dreaming,—he lies mid a heap

(Clara, Clara,)  
 Of the slain by his hand: what is death but a sleep?  
 Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast:  
 Love wrought his undoing: "No prudence could keep  
 The love-maddened wretch from his fate." That is best,  
 Rosny, Rosny!

(1889.)

## POETICS

"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?

"Flower she is, my rose"—or else "My very swan is  
 she"—  
 Or perhaps," Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below, Love,  
 That art thou!"—to them, belike: no such vain words  
 from me.

"Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath," I chide it:

"Bend thy neck its best, swan,—hers the whiter curve!"  
 Be the moon the moon: my Love I place beside it:

What is she? Her human self,—no lower word will serve.  
 (1889.)

## SUMMUM BONUM

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:  
 All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one  
 gem:

In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:  
 Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and  
 —how far above them—

Truth, that's brighter than gem,

Trust, that's purer than pearl,—

Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me  
 In the kiss of one girl.

(1889.)

## BAD DREAMS

Last night I saw you in my sleep:

And how you charm of face was changed!

I asked, "Some love, some faith you keep?"

You answered, "Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke—a twofold bliss:

Waking was one, but next there came

This other: "Though I felt, for this,

My heart break, I loved on the same."

(1889.)

## DEVELOPMENT

My Father was a scholar and knew Greek.

When I was five years old, I asked him once

"What do you read about?"

"The siege of Troy."

"What is a siege, and what is Troy?"

Whereat

He piled up chairs and tables for a town,

Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat

—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)

By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close

Under the footstool, being cowardly,

But whom—since she was worth the pains, poor puss—

Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai,—sought

By taking Troy to get possession of

—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,



(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance  
 And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self.  
 This taught me who was who and what was what:  
 So far I rightly understood the case  
 At five years old; a huge delight it proved  
 And still proves—thanks to that instructor sage  
 My Father, who knew better than turn straight  
 Learning's full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,  
 Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind,  
 Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,  
 That—I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege—  
 My Father came upon our make-believe.  
 "How would you like to read yourself the tale  
 Properly told, of which I gave you first  
 Merely such notion as a boy could bear?  
 Pope, now, would give you the precise account  
 Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,  
 You'll hear—who knows?—from Homer's very mouth.  
 Learn Greek by all means, read the 'Blind Old Man,  
 Sweetest of Singers'—*tuphlos* which means 'blind,'  
*Hedistos* which means 'sweetest.' Time enough!  
 Try, anyhow, to master him some day;  
 Until when, take what serves for substitute,  
 Read Pope,<sup>1</sup> by all means!"

So I ran through Pope,  
 Enjoyed the tale—what history so true?  
 Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,  
 Grew fitter thus for what was promised next—  
 The very thing itself, the actual words,  
 When I could turn—say, Buttmann<sup>2</sup> to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,  
 "Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?  
 There's Heine,<sup>3</sup> where the big books block the shelf:  
 Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!"

<sup>1</sup> The translation of Homer by Alexander Pope (1688-1744).

<sup>2</sup> Author of an advanced Greek grammar.

<sup>3</sup> Heine (usually spelled Heyne) was editor of a standard text of Homer.

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned  
 Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue,  
 And there an end of learning. Had you asked  
 The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,  
 "Who was it wrote the *Iliad*?"—what a laugh!  
 "Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life  
 Doubtless some facts exist: it's everywhere:  
 We have not settled, though, his place of birth:  
 He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:  
 Seven cities claimed him—Scio, with best right,  
 Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we  
 have.

Then there's the 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice,'  
 That's all—unless they dig 'Margites' up  
 (I'd like that) nothing more remains to know."

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;  
 Until—"What's this the Germans say in fact  
 That Wolf<sup>1</sup> found out first? It's unpleasant work  
 Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief:  
 All the same, where we live, we learn, that's sure."  
 So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena*.  
 And after Wolf, a dozen of his like  
 Proved there was never any Troy at all,  
 Neither Besiegers nor Besieged,—nay, worse,—  
 No actual Homer, no authentic text,  
 No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,  
 Had treasured in my heart and soul so long—  
 Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,  
 Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts  
 And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed  
 From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.  
 Assuredly thenceforward—thank my stars!—  
 However it got there, deprive who could—  
 Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,  
 Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,  
 Achilles and his Friend?—though Wolf —ah, Wolf!  
 Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

<sup>1</sup> German scholar, who maintained that Homer was the compiler, rather than the author, of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

But then, "No dream's worth waking"—Browning says:  
 And here's the reason why I tell thus much.  
 I, now mature man, you anticipate,  
 May blame my Father justifiably  
 For letting me dream out my nonage thus,  
 And only by such slow and sure degrees  
 Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,  
 Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.  
 Why did he ever let me dream at all,  
 Not bid me taste the story in its strength?  
 Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified  
 To rightly understand mythology,  
 Silence at least was in his power to keep:  
 I might have—somehow—correspondingly—  
 Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,  
 Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,  
 My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,  
 A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,  
 Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.  
 Could not I have excogitated this  
 Without believing such men really were?  
 That is—he might have put into my hand  
 The "Ethics"?<sup>1</sup> In translation, if you please,  
 Exact, no pretty lying that improves,  
 To suit the modern taste: no more no less—  
 The "Ethics:" 't is a treatise I find hard  
 To read aright now that my hair is gray,  
 And I can manage the original.  
 At five years old—how ill had fared its leaves!  
 Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,<sup>2</sup>  
 At least I soil no page with bread and milk,  
 Nor crumple, dogs-ear and deface—boys' way.

(1889.)

<sup>1</sup> One of Aristotle's works.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle (384-322 B. C.), born at Stagiros.

## EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,  
 When you set your fancies free,  
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—  
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,  
 —Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!

What had I on earth to do

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?

Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drive!

—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would  
triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever

There as here!"

(1889.)

# PLAYS



## PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

PERSONS

{ Pippa.  
 { Ottima.  
 { Sebald.  
 { *Foreign Students.*  
 { Gottlieb.  
 { Schramm.  
 { Jules.  
 { Phene.  
 { *Austrian Police.*  
 { Bluphocks.  
 { Luigi and his Mother.  
 { *Poor Girls.*  
 { *Monsignor and his Attendants.*

## INTRODUCTION

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO<sup>1</sup> IN THE TREVISAN

*A large mean airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

Day!

Faster and more fast,  
 O'er night's brim, day boils at last:  
 Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
 Where spurting and suppressed it lay,  
 For not a froth-flake touched the rim  
 Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
 Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;  
 But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,  
 Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,  
 Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
 Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,  
 A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,  
 The least of thy gazes or glances,

<sup>1</sup> A small town, well known to Browning, about thirty miles from Venice.

(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)  
 One of thy choices or one of thy chances,  
 (Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)  
 —My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,  
 Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,  
 Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—  
 Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,  
 As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—  
 All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not  
 As prosperous ones are treated, those who live  
 At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,  
 In readiness to take what thou wilt give,  
 And free to let alone what thou refusest;  
 For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest  
 Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,  
 Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:  
 Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow  
 Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.  
 All other men and women that this earth  
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,  
 Make general plenty cure particular dearth,  
 Get more joy one way, if another, less:  
 Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven  
 What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—  
 Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!  
 Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—  
 And let thy morning rain on that superb  
 Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb  
 Her Sebalk's homage? All the while thy rain  
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane  
 He will but press the closer, breathe more warm  
 Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?  
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom  
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom  
 Save for their dear selves? 'Tis their marriage-day;  
 And while they leave church and go home their way  
 Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be  
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.  
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve  
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—



The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,  
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,  
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close  
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,  
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak  
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make  
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome  
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,  
And say here masses proper to release  
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?  
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward  
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.  
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil  
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil  
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!

And here I let time slip for nought!  
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught  
With a single splash from my ewer!  
You that would mock the best pursuer,  
Was my basin over-deep?  
One splash of water ruins you asleep,  
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits  
Wheeling and counterwheeling,  
Reeling, broken beyond healing:  
Now grow together on the ceiling!  
That will task your wits.  
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see  
Morsel after morsel flee  
As merrily, as giddily . . .  
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,  
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?  
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?  
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,  
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!  
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple  
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll  
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse  
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!  
I am queen of thee, floweret!  
And each fleshy blossom  
Preserve I not—(safer  
Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)  
 —From weevil and chafer?  
 Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the bee;  
 Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,  
 Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,  
 Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?  
 My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?  
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,  
 The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:  
 But, this one day, I have leave to go,  
 And play out my fancy's fullest games;  
 I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—  
 That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names  
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,  
 Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:  
 I am no less than Ottima, take warning!  
 The gardens, and the great stone house above,  
 And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,  
 Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,  
 To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:  
 And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,  
 I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate  
 About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,  
 Too bold, too confident she'll still face down  
 The spitefullest of talkers in our town.  
 How we talk in the little town below!

But love, love, love—there's better love, I know!  
 This foolish love was only day's first offer;  
 I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:  
 For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally  
 Out of Possagno church at noon?  
 Their house looks over Orcana valley:  
 Why should not I be the bride as soon  
 As Ottima? For I saw, beside,  
 Arrive last night that little bride—  
 Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash  
 Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,

Blacker than all except the black eyelash;  
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!  
—So strict was she, the veil  
Should cover close her pale  
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,  
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! for are not such  
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,  
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?  
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:  
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.  
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,  
Keep that foot its lady primness,  
Let those ankles never swerve  
From their exquisite reserve,  
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,  
All but naked to the knee!  
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss  
So startling as her real first infant kiss?  
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me  
Leave to take or to refuse,  
In earnest, do you think I'd choose  
That sort of new love to enslave me?  
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;  
As little fear of losing it as winning:  
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,  
And only parents' love can last our lives.  
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,  
Commune inside our turret: what prevents  
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair  
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred  
With each to each imparting sweet intents  
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—  
(For I observe of late, the evening walk  
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends  
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,  
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)  
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,  
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;  
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew  
What was my mother's face—my father, too!

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all  
 Is God's; then why not have God's love befall  
 Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,  
 Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home  
 Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn  
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn  
 With love for all men! I, to-night at least,  
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share  
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?  
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God:  
 If now, as formerly he trod  
 Paradise, his presence fills  
 Our earth, each only as God wills  
 Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,  
 Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not a "small event!" Why "small"?  
 Costs it more pain that this, ye call  
 A "great event," should come to pass,  
 Than that? Untwine me from the mass  
 Of deeds which make up life, one deed  
 Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—  
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,  
 And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,  
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!  
 A pretty thing to care about  
 So mightily, this single holiday!  
 But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?  
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
 Down the grass-path gray with dew,  
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,  
 Where the swallow never flew  
 Nor yet cicale dared carouse—  
 No, dared carouse!

[*She enters the street.*]

## I.—MORNING

*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house. LUCA'S  
Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.*

*Seb. [sings.] Let the watching lids wink!  
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think!  
Deep into the night, drink!*

*Otti.* Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights,  
perhaps;  
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink  
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!  
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall  
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice  
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,  
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course  
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,  
Or must I find you something else to spoil?  
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is't full morning?  
Oh, don't speak then!

*Seb.* Ay, thus it used to be!  
Ever your house was, I remember, shut  
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled  
On mornings through the vale here; country girls  
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,  
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:  
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!  
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,  
Nature, another outside. I looked up—  
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,  
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.  
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed  
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."  
This house was his, this chair, this window—his.

*Otti.* Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's;  
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza  
Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain enough, that blue!  
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

*Seb.* Morning?  
It seems to me a night with a sun added.  
Where's dew, where's freshness? That bruised plant, I  
bruised

In getting through the lattice yestereve,  
 Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark  
 I' the dust o' the sill.

*Otti.* Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

*Seb.* Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,  
 Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse  
 The world and all outside! Let us throw off  
 This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out  
 With all of it.

*Otti.* Best never speak of it.

*Seb.* Best speak again and yet again of it,  
 Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"  
 For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"  
 And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,  
 "His blood."

*Otti.* Assuredly if I repented  
 The deed—

*Seb.* Repent? Who should repent, or why?  
 What puts that in your head? Did I once say  
 That I repented?

*Otti.* No; I said the deed . . .

*Seb.* "The deed" and "the event"—just now it was  
 "Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!  
 Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,  
 I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

*Otti.* Here's the wine;  
 I brought it when we left the house above,  
 And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

*Seb.* But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

*Otti.* There trudges on his business from the Duomo  
 Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood  
 And bare feet; always in one place at church,  
 Close under the stone wall by the south entry.  
 I used to take him for a brown cold piece  
 Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose  
 To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:  
 Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,  
 I rather should account the plastered wall  
 A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.  
 This, Sebald?

*Seb.* No, the white wine—the white wine!  
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year  
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;  
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black eyes!  
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

*Otti.* You brought those foreign prints. We looked at  
them  
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme  
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying  
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up  
To hunt them out.

*Seb.* 'Faith, he is not alive  
To fondle you before my face.

*Otti.* Do you  
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life  
For that, my Sebald?

*Seb.* Hark you, Ottima!  
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much  
One of the other—that is, not make more  
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,  
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed  
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,  
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you  
In spite of Luca and what's come to him  
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,  
White sneering old reproachful face and all!  
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if  
We still could lose each other, were not tied  
By this: conceive you?

*Otti.* Love!

*Seb.* Not tied so sure!  
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck  
His insolence back into him—am I  
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?

*Otti.* Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another,)  
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,  
For instance that May morning we two stole  
Under the green ascent of sycamores—  
If we had come upon a thing like that  
Suddenly . . .

*Seb.* "A thing"—there again—"a thing!"

*Otti.* Then, Venus' body, had we come upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse  
 Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—  
 Would you have pored upon it? Why persist  
 In poring now upon it? For 'tis here  
 As much as there in the deserted house:  
 You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,  
 Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .  
 Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold  
 His two dead hands, and say, "I hate you worse;  
 Luca, than . . ."

*Seb.* Off, off—take your hands off mine,  
 'Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?

*Otti*; There's one thing must be done; you know what  
 thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep  
 Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

*Seb.* What would come, think you, if we let him lie  
 Just as he is? Let him lie there until  
 The angels take him! He is turned by this  
 Off from his face beside, as you will see.

*Otti.* This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.  
 Three, four—four gray hairs! Is it so you said  
 A plait of hair should wave across my neck?  
 No—this way.

*Seb.* Ottima, I would give your neck,  
 Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,  
 That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world,  
 So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter  
 His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign  
 Surprise that I return at eve to sup,  
 When all the morning I was loitering here—  
 Bid me dispatch my business and begone.  
 I would . . .

*Otti.* See!

*Seb.* No, I'll finish. Do you think  
 I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?  
 All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine  
 To suffer; there's a recompense in guilt;  
 One must be venturous and fortunate:  
 What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh  
 O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;  
 Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.



But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn  
 His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—  
 Do lovers in romances sin that way?  
 Why, I was starving when I used to call  
 And teach you music, starving while you plucked me  
 These flowers to smell!

*Otti.* My poor lost friend!

*Seb.* He gave me

Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach  
 My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—  
 Had he no right? What was to wonder at?  
 He sat by us at table quietly:  
 Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?  
 Could he do less than make pretence to strike?  
 'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes  
 Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!  
 And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?

*Otti.* Well then, I love you better now than ever,  
 And best (look at me while I speak to you)—  
 Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,  
 This mask, this simulated ignorance,  
 This affectation of simplicity,  
 Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours  
 May not now be looked over: look it down!  
 Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,  
 Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!  
 Speak not! The past, would you give up the past  
 Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?  
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you?  
 The garden's silence: even the single bee  
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,  
 And where he hid you only could surmise  
 By some campanula chalice set a-swing.  
 Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"

*Seb.* And I drew

Back; put far back your face with both my hands.  
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your face  
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

*Otti.* And when I ventured to receive you here,,  
 Made you steal hither in the mornings—

*Seb.* When:

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,,

Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread  
To a yellow haze?

*Otti.* Ah—my sign was, the sun  
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree  
Nipped by the first frost.

*Seb.* You would always laugh  
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass  
Over my ankles.

*Otti.* Then our crowning night!

*Seb.* The July night?

*Otti.* The day of it too, Sebald!  
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,  
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend  
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,  
And smother up all life except our life.  
So lay we till the storm came.

*Seb.* How it came!

*Otti.* Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,  
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen  
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,  
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

*Seb.* Yes!

*Otti.* —While I stretched myself upon you, hands  
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook  
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—  
You, Sebald, the same you!

*Seb.* Slower, Ottima!

*Otti.* And as we lay—

*Seb.* Less vehemently! Love me!  
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!  
Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe slow, speak slow!  
Do not lean on me!

*Otti.* Sebald, as we lay,  
Rising and falling only with our pants,  
Who said, "Let death come now! 'Tis right to die!  
Right to be punished! nought completes such bliss  
But woe!" Who said that?

*Seb.* How did we ever rise?

Was't that we slept? Why did it end?

Otti.

I felt you

Taper into a point the ruffled ends  
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.  
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!  
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more  
My great queen?

Otti.

Bind it thrice about my brow;  
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,  
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Seb.

I crown you  
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,  
Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*The year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn—  
God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!*

[PIPPA passes.

Seb. God's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who  
spoke?

You, you spoke!

Otti.

Oh—that little ragged girl!  
She must have rested on the step: we give them  
But this one holiday the whole year round.  
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?  
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.  
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!  
She does not hear: call you out louder!

Seb.

Leave me!

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!

Otti.

Sebald?

Seb. Wipe off that paint! I hate you!

Otti.

Miserable!

Seb. My God, and she is emptied of it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone  
 All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?  
 Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,  
 No purpose holds the features up together,  
 Only the cloven brow and puckered chin  
 Stay in their places: and the very hair,  
 That seemed to have a sort of life in it,  
 Drops, a dead web!

*Otti.* Speak to me—not of me!

*Seb.* —That round great full-orbed face, where not an  
 angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

*Otti.* To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!  
 A coward, too: but ingrate's worse than all.  
 Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!  
 Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!  
 A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

*Seb.* My God!

Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—  
 I should have known there was no blood beneath!

*Otti.* You hate me then? You hate me then?

*Seb.* To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,  
 And fascinate by sinning, show herself  
 Superior—guilt from its excess superior  
 To innocence! That little peasant's voice  
 Has righted all again. Though I be lost,  
 I know which is the better, never fear,  
 Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,  
 Nature or trick! I see what I have done,  
 Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel  
 Such torments—let the world take credit thence—  
 I, having done my deed, pay too its price!  
 I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!

*Otti.* —Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!  
 Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then  
 Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!  
 I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!  
 Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me  
 The more because you lean on me, my own  
 Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

*Seb.* My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all I feel  
Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,  
A hurry-down within me, as of waters  
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:  
There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!  
*Otti.* Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the hillside to  
Orcana. Foreign STUDENTS of painting and sculpture, from  
Venice, assembled opposite the house of JULES, a young  
French statuary, at Possagno.*

*1st Student.* Attention! my own post is beneath this  
window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three  
or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his  
pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a de-  
faulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered  
to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

*2nd Stud.* All here! Only our poet's away—never having  
much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that  
fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself,  
and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested  
was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too;  
and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste,  
immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetic epitaph  
appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—“*Here a mam-  
moth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own  
fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a  
knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both  
classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Cata-  
logue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip.  
Phæbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's  
bolus—One box Cures . . .*

*3d Stud.* Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was  
over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute  
with his bride.

*2d Stud.* Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have  
been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus  
nostris*<sup>1</sup> . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs  
than the boy Giovacchino!

<sup>1</sup> And to our dogs.

*1st Stud.* To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came along from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all. Now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

*Gott.* Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

*4th Stud.* Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

*Gott.* His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

*4th Stud.* That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

*Gott.* See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's<sup>1</sup> women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those above, his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Stud.* Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—its drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look

<sup>1</sup> Great Italian sculptor (1757-1822).

on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus

*1st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*<sup>1</sup>—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pieta*<sup>2</sup> for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-by, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

*5th Stud.* Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

*1st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devi's you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Græk—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's<sup>3</sup> "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen

<sup>1</sup> Psyche as a little girl, one of Canova's best works.

<sup>2</sup> Statue of the Virgin and the dead Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Greek rhetorician of the second century A. D.

years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*,<sup>1</sup> transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

*6th Stud.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

*5th Stud.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

*2d Stud.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!<sup>2</sup> rich, that your face may the better set it off.

*6th Stud.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Gott.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Stud.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Stud.* She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

<sup>1</sup> A Venetian theatre.

<sup>2</sup> Burlesque rendering of the name of Annibale Caracci, an Italian painter.



*Gott.* How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

*1st Stud.* They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

## II.—NOON.

*Over Orcana.* The house of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins—

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you  
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,  
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—  
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean  
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn  
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last  
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 'tis their scent  
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever  
This one way till I change, grow you—I could  
Change into you, beloved!

You by me,  
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,  
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!  
I have spoken: speak you!

O my life to come!  
My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;  
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?  
Where must I place you? When I think that once  
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven  
Without you! Shall I ever work again,  
Get fairly into my old ways again,  
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,  
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?  
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—  
The live truth, passing and repassing me,  
Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first,  
See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?  
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps  
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam  
Into my world!

Again those eyes complete

Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,  
Of all my room holds; to return and rest  
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:  
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,  
And this were the one moment of surprise  
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing  
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!  
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;  
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:  
This minion, a Coluthus,<sup>1</sup> writ in red,  
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—  
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek  
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!  
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type  
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,  
To mark great places with due gratitude;  
*"He said, and on Antinous directed  
A bitter shaft"* . . . a flower blots out the rest!  
Again upon your search? My statues, then!  
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look  
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,  
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.  
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognised?  
I thought you would have seen that here you sit  
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,<sup>2</sup>  
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.  
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—  
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,  
A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,  
Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,<sup>3</sup>  
Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.  
'Praise those who slew Hipparchus!'<sup>4</sup> cry the guests,

<sup>1</sup> A sixth century Greek poet, who wrote a poem "The Rape of Helen," found by Besarion, a fifteenth century Greek cardinal.

<sup>2</sup> Queen of the Amazons.

<sup>3</sup> I. e. crowned with laurel, a supposed protection against lightning.

<sup>4</sup> Athenian tyrant, slain in 514 B. C. by Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves  
As erst above our champion: stand up, all!,"  
See, I have laboured to express your thought.  
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms  
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,  
Only consenting at the branches' end  
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,  
The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes  
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside  
His brain where visionary forms throng up,  
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch  
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine  
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, not crowns cast off,  
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—  
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,  
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.  
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"  
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?  
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly  
Even to the silence! Why, before I found  
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself  
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff  
For better nature's birth by means of art:  
With me, each substance tended to one form  
Of beauty—to the human archetype—  
On every side occurred suggestive germs  
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—  
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,  
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,  
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just  
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.  
But of the stuffs one can be master of,  
How I divined their capabilities!  
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk  
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,  
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;  
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure  
To cut its one confided thought clean out  
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools  
More pliable than jelly—as it were  
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths  
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,

And whence all baser substance may be worked;  
 Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it  
 Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,  
 When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips?  
 —Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,  
 Lay bare those blueish veins of blood asleep?  
 Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised  
 By the swift implement sent home at once,  
 Flushes and glowings radiate and hover  
 About its track?

Phene? what—why is this?  
 That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!  
 Ay, you will die—I knew that you would die!

*PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must  
 Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak  
 Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind  
 One half of it, beside; and do not care  
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.  
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try  
 To say the words Natalia made me learn,  
 To please your friends,—it is to keep myself  
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting that  
 Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,  
 Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
 The music's life, and me along with that—  
 No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are:  
 Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!  
 If I could look forever up to them,  
 As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,  
 All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,  
 Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth  
 Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay  
 —Never to overtake the rest of me,  
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,  
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,  
 Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,  
 Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,  
 Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes  
 Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .  
 I could prevent it if I understood:  
 More of your words to me: was't in the tone  
 Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat  
 Their speech, if that contents you! Only change  
 No more, and I shall find it presently  
 Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.  
 Natalia threatened me that harm should follow  
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,  
 But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.  
 Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends  
 And meant you well,—because I doubted it,  
 Observing (what was very strange to see)  
 On every face, so different in all else,  
 The same smile girls like me are used to bear,  
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low;  
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,  
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit  
 Which seems to take possession of the world  
 And make of God a tame confederate,  
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!  
 But still Natalia said they were your friends,  
 And they assented though they smiled the more,  
 And all came round me,—that thin Englishman  
 With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;  
 He held a paper—"What we want," said he,  
 Ending some explanation to his friends—  
 "Is something slow, involved and mystical,  
 To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste  
 And lure him on until, at innermost  
 Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!  
 —As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:  
 For insects on the rind are seen at once,  
 And brushed aside as soon, but this is found  
 Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."  
 And so he read what I have got by heart:  
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am yours” . . .  
 No—is not that, or like that, part of words  
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose  
 What costs much pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;  
 In my life, a devil rather than saint;  
 In my brain, as poor a creature too:  
 No end to all I cannot do!  
 Yet do one thing at least I can—  
 Love a man or hate a man  
 Supremely: thus my lore began.  
 Through the Valley of Love I went,  
 In the lovingest spot to abide,  
 And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,  
 I found Hate dwelling beside.  
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,  
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)  
 And further, I traversed Hate's grove,  
 In the hatefullest nook to dwell;  
 But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love  
 Where the shadow threefold fell.  
 (The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,  
 Not a painter's lips should tell!)*

“And here,” said he, “Jules probably will ask,  
 ‘You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,  
 My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed  
 What needs some explanation! What means this?’ ”  
 —And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,  
 From simple that I was of late.  
 Once, when I loved, I would enlace  
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face  
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—  
 As if by mere love I could love immensely!  
 Once, when I hated, I would plunge  
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge  
 My foe's whole life out like a sponge—  
 As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!  
 But now I am wiser, know better the fashion  
 How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:  
 And if I see cause to love more, hate more  
 Than ever man loved, ever hated before—  
 And seek in the Valley of Love  
 The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove*

*Where my soul may surely reach  
 The essence, nought less, of each,  
 The Hate of all Hates, the Love  
 Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—  
 I find them the very warders  
 Each of the other's borders.  
 When I love most, Love is disguised  
 In Hate; and when Hate is surprised  
 In Love, then I hate most: ask  
 How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,  
 Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—  
 And how, having hated thee,  
 I sought long and painfully  
 To reach thy heart, nor prick  
 The skin but pierce to the quick—  
 Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight  
 By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,  
 Hated me: they at Venice—presently  
 Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:  
 If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.

Keep

What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,  
 Consider! and the money was but meant  
 For two years' travel, which is over now,  
 All chance or hope or care or need of it.  
 This—and what comes from selling these, my casts  
 And books and medals, except . . . let them go  
 Together, so the produce keeps you safe  
 Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance  
 (For all's chance here) I should survive the gang  
 At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,  
 We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!*

*When—where—*

*How—can this arm establish her above me,*

*If fortune fixed her as my lady there,  
There already, to eternally reprove me?  
("Hist!"—said Kate the queen;<sup>1</sup>  
But "Oh!" cried the maiden, binding her tresses,  
"Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
Crumbling your hounds their messes!")*

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honor,  
My heart!  
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?  
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.  
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!  
("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the queen;  
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,  
"Tis only a page that carols unseen,  
Fitting your hawks their jesses!")*

[PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?  
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced  
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here  
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,  
And peasants sing how once a certain page  
Pined for the grace of her so far above  
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—  
She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,  
"Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing

To see our lady above all need of us;  
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,  
But the world looks so. If whoever loves  
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,  
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,  
Why should we always choose the page's part?  
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—  
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,

<sup>1</sup>Caterina Cornaro (1454–1510), who, having been forced to abdicate the throne of Cyprus, lived at Asolo.



Like my own Psyche—fresh upon her lips  
Alit, the visionary butterfly,  
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,  
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.  
This body had no soul before, but slept  
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free  
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things  
Fastened their image on its passiveness:  
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!  
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff  
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul  
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save  
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death  
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear  
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them  
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!

I wanted silence only; there is clay  
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes  
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure  
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!  
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,  
What the whole world except our love—my own,  
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,  
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle  
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—  
I do but break these paltry models up  
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—  
And save him from my statue meeting him?  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Like a god going through his world, there stands  
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,  
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:  
And you are ever by me while I gaze  
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.* So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark, over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*<sup>1</sup>) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say—“*How Moses hocuspocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.*”—In no wise!—“*Shacka-brach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Purcha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!*” So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge<sup>2</sup>—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolos . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his

<sup>1</sup> A statement from a Medieval Latin formula for the stating and reduction of valid syllogisms.

<sup>2</sup> Calvinist bishop and writer (1626-1707).

Intendant—I possess a burning pocketfull of *zwanzigers*) . . .  
*To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

*1st Policeman.* There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning:

*2d Pol.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here! he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

*Blup.* Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panerge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

*2d Pol.* Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe muskmelon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger*! Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon's over or nearly so.

*3d Pol.* Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2d Pol.* Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spurt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari<sup>1</sup> are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg.<sup>2</sup> Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

<sup>1</sup> An Italian secret society which had as its aim the freeing of Italy from Austrian rule.

<sup>2</sup> An Austrian prison.

## III.—EVENING

*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo. LUIGI and his mother entering.*

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing  
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

*Luigi.* Here in the archway?

*Mother.* Oh no, no—in farther,  
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

*Luigi.* Here surely, then.  
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!  
Hark—"Lucius Junius!"<sup>1</sup> The very ghost of a voice  
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?  
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?  
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair  
Who lean out of their topmost fortress—look  
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,  
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.  
Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"  
That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,<sup>2</sup>  
Come down and meet your fate? Hark—"Meet your fate!"

*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not  
Go to his City! putting crime aside,  
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:  
Your Pellicos<sup>3</sup> and writers for effect,  
Write for effect.

*Luigi.* Hush! say A. writes, and B.

*Mother.* These A.'s and B.'s write for effect, I say.  
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good  
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,  
None of his virtues; he is old beside,  
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why  
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

*Luigi.* They teach  
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,  
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,

<sup>1</sup> Lucius Junius Brutus, who in 509 B. C. drove the last of the kings from Rome and established the Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Francis I., Emperor of Austria (1708-1765).

<sup>3</sup> Pelleco, one of the Carbonari, suffered imprisonment for eleven years.

I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.

Mother, they visit night by night . . .

*Mother.* —You, Luigi?

Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

*Luigi.* Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,  
You may assure yourself I say and say  
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now  
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect  
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,  
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?  
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.  
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,  
And see men merry as if no Italy  
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,  
Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,  
More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble.  
No, trouble's a bad word: for as I walk  
There's springing and melody and giddiness,  
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,  
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,  
Return to me—whatever may amuse me:  
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven  
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,  
The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!  
Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way  
For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"  
And in return for all this, I can trip  
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go  
This evening, mother!

*Mother.* But mistrust yourself—  
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

*Mother.* Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means  
To this wild enterprise. Say, you are right,—  
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass  
What would require a cool head, a cold heart,  
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

*Luigi.* Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.  
The dying is best part of it. Too much  
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,  
To leave myself excuse for longer life:  
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,

That I might finish with it ere my fellows  
 Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?  
 I was put at the board-head, helped to all  
 At first; I rise up happy and content.  
 God must be glad one loves his world so much.  
 I can give news of earth to all the dead  
 Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars  
 Which had a right to come first and see ebb  
 The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—  
 Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims  
 That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,  
 Impatient of the azure—and that day  
 In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—  
 May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—  
 Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

*Mother.* (He will not go!)

*Luigi.* You smile at me! 'Tis true,—  
 Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,  
 Environ my devotedness as quaintly  
 As round about some antique altar wreath  
 The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

*Mother.* See now: you reach the city, you must cross  
 His threshold—how?

*Luigi.* Oh, that's if we conspired!  
 Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—  
 But guess not how the qualities most fit  
 For such an office, qualities I have,  
 Would little stead me, otherwise employed,  
 Yet prove of rarest merit only here.  
 Every one knows for what his excellence  
 Will serve, but no one ever will consider  
 For what his worst defect might serve: and yet  
 Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder  
 In search of a distorted ash?—I find  
 The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.  
 Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man  
 Arriving at the palace on my errand!  
 No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—  
 White satin here, to set off my black hair;  
 In I shall march—for you may watch your life out  
 Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;  
 More than one man spoils everything. March straight—

Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.  
 Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on  
 Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all  
 Inside the turret here a hundred times.  
 Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!  
 But where they cluster thickliest is the door  
 Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab  
 Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,  
 Whence he is bound and what's his business now.  
 Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:  
 Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!  
 Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I could dream  
 They<sup>1</sup> got about me—Andrea from his exile,  
 Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his grave!

*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism  
 The easiest virtue for a selfish man  
 To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—  
 If he must love beyond,—but nought between:  
 As a short-sighted man sees nought midway  
 His body and the sun above. But you  
 Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient  
 To my least wish, and running o'er with love:  
 I could not call you cruel or unkind.

Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!

*Luigi.* Now do you try me, or make sport of me?  
 How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .  
 (If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)  
 —Never by conquest but by cunning, for  
 That treaty whereby . . .

*Mother.*

Well?

*Luigi.*

(Sure, he's arrived,

The tell-tale cuckoo: spring's his confidant,  
 And he lets out her April purposes!)  
 Or . . . better go at once to modern time.  
 He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand  
 But can't restate the matter; that's my boast:  
 Others could reason it out to you, and prove  
 Things they have made me feel.

<sup>1</sup> I. e. Others who had conspired against Austrian tyranny.

*Mother.*

Why go to-night?

Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now  
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

*Luigi.* "I am the bright and morning-star,"<sup>1</sup> saith God—  
And, "to such an one I give the morning-star."<sup>2</sup>  
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift  
Of the morning-star?

*Mother.*

Chiara will love to see

That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those who live through  
June!

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps  
That triumph at the heels of June the god  
Leading his revel through our leafy world.  
Yes, Chiara will be here.

*Mother.*

In June: remember,

Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo?

*Mother.*

The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned  
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:  
In June she comes.

*Luigi.*

We were to see together

The Titian<sup>3</sup> at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*A king lived long ago,  
In the morning of the world,  
When earth was nigher heaven than now;  
And the king's locks curled,  
Disparting o'er a forehead full  
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn  
Of some sacrificial bull—  
Only calm as a babe new-born:  
For he was got to a sleepy mood,  
So safe from all decrepitude,  
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,*

<sup>1</sup> Revelation, 22: 16.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation, 2: 28.

<sup>3</sup> Celebrated Venetian painter (about 1477-1576). An altar-piece by him is in the Cathedral at Treviso.



*(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed)  
That, having lived thus long, there seemed  
No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was:  
Before his palace, in the sun,  
He sat to see his people pass,  
And judge them every one  
From its threshold of smooth stone.  
They haled him many a valley-thief,  
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief,  
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,  
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found  
On the sea-sand left aground;  
And sometimes clung about his feet,  
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,  
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak  
Of one with sullen thickset brows:  
And sometimes from the prison-house  
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,  
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed  
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,  
Worm-like into the temple,—caught  
He was by the very God,  
Who ever in the darkness strode  
Backward and forward, keeping watch  
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!  
These, all and every one,  
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sitting in the sun!

*His councillors, on left and right,  
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise  
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes  
Where the very blue had turned to white.  
'Tis said, a Python scared one day  
The breathless city, till he came,  
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
Where the old king sat to judge away;  
But when he saw the sweepy hair*

*Girt with a crown of berries rare  
Which the God will hardly give to wear  
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
At his wondrous forest rites,—  
Seeing this, he did not dare  
Approach that threshold in the sun,  
Assault the old king smiling there.  
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*

[PIPPA passes.

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now that the world ends!  
The Python at the city, on the throne,  
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,  
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.  
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,  
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?  
'Tis God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor GIRLS sitting on the steps.*

*1st Girl.* There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout seafarer!  
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.  
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

*2d Girl.* I? This sunset  
To finish.

*3d Girl.* That old—somebody I know,  
Grayer and older than my grandfather,  
To give me the same treat he gave last week—  
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,  
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling  
The while some folly about how well I fare,  
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:  
Since had he not himself been late this morning  
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .  
“Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

*2d Girl.* How she can lie!

*3d Girl.* Look there—by the nails—

*2d Girl.*

What makes your fingers red!

*3d Girl.* Dipping them into wine to write bad words with  
On the bright table: how he laughed!

*1st Girl.*

My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear  
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,  
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;  
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;  
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,  
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should say,  
This is away in the fields—miles!

*3d Girl.*

Say at once

You'd be at home: she'd always be at home!  
Now comes the story of the farm among  
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed  
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,  
They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,  
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,  
Made a dung-hill of your garden!

*1st Girl.*

They destroy

My garden since I left them? well—perhaps  
I would have done so: so I hope they have!  
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;  
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,  
It must have been there long ere I was born:  
*Cric—cric*—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead  
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there  
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,  
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.

*3d Girl.* How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—before  
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns  
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!  
This is my way: I answer every one  
Who asks me why I make so much of him—  
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he'll not be gulled!")  
"He that seduced me when I was a girl  
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,  
Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be: that pleases!  
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!  
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—  
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!

*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend  
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

*2d Girl.* When you were young? Nor are you young,  
that's true.

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!

Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,

Than black: the men say they are sick of black,

Black eyes, black hair!

*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough.

Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys

And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,

Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up

An ortolan.

*2d Girl.* Why, there! is not that Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window,—quick!—

Where the lights are?

*1st Girl.* That she? No, or she would sing,

For the Intendant said . . .

*3d Girl.* Oh, you sing first!

Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,—

Sing that song the young English noble made,

Who took you for the purest of the pure,

And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

*2d Girl* [sings.]

*You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry*

*Your love's protracted growing:*

*June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,*

*From seeds of April's sowing.*

*I plant a heartfelt now: some seed*

*At least is sure to strike,*

*And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,*

*Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,*

*A grave's one violet:*

*Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.*

*What's death? You'll love me yet!*

*3d Girl.* [To PIPPA, who approaches.] Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

#### IV.—NIGHT

*Inside the Palace by the Duomo, MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.*

*Mon.* Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur*<sup>1</sup> . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [To the Intendant.] Not you, Ugo! [The others leave the apartment.] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

*Inten.* Uguccio—

*Mon.* . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Inten.* Do you choose this especial night to question me?

*Mon.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the third of December, I find him . . .

*Inten.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

<sup>1</sup>May the blessed be blessed—presumably the beginning of a grace.

*Mon.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

*Inten.* Is Correggio a painter?

*Mon.* Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

*Inten.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

*Mon.* Ugo!

*Inten.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,<sup>1</sup>—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

<sup>1</sup> Italian for *farm*.

*Mon.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

*Inten.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

*Mon.* I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

*Inten.* No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

*Mon.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo*<sup>1</sup> shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sack-cloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

<sup>1</sup> Penny

*Inten.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Mon.*—Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

*Inten.* "Forgive us our trespasses"?

*Mon.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Inten.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Mon.* 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

*Inten.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.



*Mon.* Liar!

*Inten.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

*Mon.* I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Inten.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and forever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*Over-head the tree-tops meet,  
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;  
There was nought above me, nought below,  
My childhood had not learned to know:  
For, what are the voices of birds  
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,*

*Only so much more sweet?  
 The knowledge of that with my life begun.  
 But I had so near made out the sun,  
 And counted your stars, the seven and one,  
 Like the fingers of my hand:  
 Nay, I could all but understand  
 Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;  
 And just when out of her soft fifty changes  
 No unfamiliar face might overlook me—  
 Suddenly God took me.*

[PIPPA passes.]

*Mon. [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—  
 within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He  
 dares . . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—  
 quick! Miserere mei, Domine!<sup>1</sup> quick, I say!*

*PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,  
 The mouse at her dray,  
 The grub in his tomb,  
 Wile winter away;  
 But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,  
 How fare they?  
 Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!  
 "Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze"—  
 The summer of life so easy to spend,  
 And care for to-morrow so soon put away!  
 But winter hastens at summer's end,  
 And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,  
 How fare they?  
 No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?  
 "Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes  
 More like" . . . (what said she?)—"and less like canoes!"  
 How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert  
 Impudent staring women! It had done me,  
 However, surely no such mighty hurt  
 To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:  
 No foreigner, that I can recollect,

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy upon me, O Lord!

Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect  
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings  
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.  
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,  
We shall do better, see what next year brings.  
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear  
More destitute than you perhaps next year!  
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name  
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter  
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter  
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter  
If silly talk like ours should put to shame  
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,  
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,  
No mere mortal has a right  
To carry that exalted air;  
Best people are not angels quite:  
While—not the worst of people's doings scare  
The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!  
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for  
I have just been the holy Monsignor:  
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,  
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started  
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed  
On some good errand or another,  
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,  
And the sullen company that prowled  
About his path, I noticed, scowled  
As if they had lost a prey in him.  
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,  
And I was Ottima beside,  
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.  
Day for folly, night for schooling!  
New Year's day is over and spent,  
Ill or well, I must be content.  
Even my lily's asleep, I vow:  
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked you!  
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!  
Something rare, let me instruct you,  
Is this, with petals triply swollen,  
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;  
While the leaves and parts that witness

Old proportions and their fitness,  
 Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;  
 Call this pampered thing improved now!  
 Suppose there's a king of the flowers  
 And a girl-show held in his bowers—  
 "Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"  
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,  
 I have made her gorge polenta  
 Till both cheeks are near as bouncing  
 As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!  
 See this heightened colour too,  
 For she swilled Breganze wine  
 Till her nose turned deep carmine;  
 'Twas but white when wild she grew.  
 And only by this Zanze's eyes  
 Of which we could not change the size,  
 The magnitude of what's achieved  
 Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!  
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?  
 Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,  
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!  
 Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.  
 Oh lark, be day's apostle  
 To mavis, merle and throstle,  
 Bid them their betters jostle  
 From day and its delights!  
 But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,  
 Toll the world to thy chantry;  
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods  
 Full complines with gallantry:  
 Then, owls and bats,  
 Cows and twats,  
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,  
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

*[After she has begun to undress herself.]*

Now, one thing I should like to really know:  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day:  
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so  
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind [Sitting on the bedside.  
 And border Ottima's cloak's hem.  
 Ah me, and my important part with them,  
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!  
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.  
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

*All service ranks the same with God—  
 With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
 Are we; there is no last nor first.*

[She sleeps.  
 (1841.)

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON A TRAGEDY

### PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, EARL TRESHAM.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, EARL MERTUON.

GERARD, and other retainers of LORD TRESHAM.

TIME, 17—.

### ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a lodge in LORD TRESHAM's park.  
 Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to  
 command a view of the entrance to his mansion. GERARD,  
 the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Retainer. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push  
 down me!

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot  
 Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?  
 Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?

But there's no breeding in a man of you  
 Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,  
 Old Gerard!

*Gerard.* Save your courtesies, my friend.  
 Here is my place.

*2nd Ret.* Now, Gerard, out with it!  
 What makes you sullen, this of all the days  
 I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful  
 Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match  
 With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,  
 Is coming here in utmost bravery  
 To ask our master's sister's hand?

*Ger.* What then?

*2nd Ret.* What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she  
 meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart  
 The boughs to let her through her forest walks,  
 You, always favourite for your no-deserts,  
 You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues  
 To lay his heart and house and broad lands too  
 At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze  
 Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss  
 One congee of the least page in his train,  
 You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—  
 "What then?" say you!

*3d Ret.* I'll wager he has let  
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim  
 Over the falls and gain the river!

*Ger.* Ralph,  
 Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day  
 For you and for your hawks?

*4th Ret.* Let Gerard be!  
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.  
 Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!  
 Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,  
 To purpose?

*1st Ret.* Our retainers look as fine—  
 That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself  
 With his white staff! Will not a knave behind  
 Prick him upright?

*4th Ret.* He's only bowing, fool!  
 The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

*1st Ret.* That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!

*3rd Ret.* I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop  
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find  
Their perfumed selves so indispensable  
Oh high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace  
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—  
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,  
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

*Ger.* —With Hugh  
The logman for supporter, in his right  
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

*3rd Ret.* Out on you, crab! What next, what next?  
The Earl!

*1st Ret.* Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match  
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—  
They paw the ground—Ah Walter! and that brute  
Just on his haunches by the wheel!

*6th Ret.* Ay—ay!  
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,  
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?  
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst  
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;  
No leg has he to stand on!

*1st Ret.* No? That's comfort.

*2nd Ret.* Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well,  
Gerard, see  
The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,  
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,  
Has got a starrier eye.

*3rd Ret.* His eyes are blue:  
But leave my hawks alone!

*4th Ret.* So young, and yet  
So tall and shapely!

*5th Ret.* Here's Lord Tresham's self!  
There now—there's what a nobleman should be!  
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like  
A House's head!

*2nd Ret.* But you'd not have a boy  
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon  
That stateliness?

*1st Ret.* Our master takes his hand—  
Richard and his white staff are on the move—

Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy  
 Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,  
 And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)  
 —At last I see our Lord's back and his friend's;  
 And the whole beautiful bright company  
 Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the*  
*window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*]  
 Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!  
*6th Ret.* My father drove his father first to court,  
 After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

*2nd Ret.* God bless  
 Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!  
 Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

*Ger.* Drink, my boys!  
 Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!  
*2nd Ret.* [*Aside.*] He's vexed, now, that he let the show  
 escape!

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

*Ger.* That way?

*2nd Ret.* Just so.

*Ger.* Then my way's here. [*Goes.*  
*2nd Ret.* Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used  
 To care about the pitifullest thing  
 That touched the House's honor, not an eye  
 But his could see wherein: and on a cause  
 Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard  
 Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away  
 In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,  
 Such point decorous, and such square by rule—  
 He knew such niceties, no herald more:  
 And now—you see his humour: die he will!

*2nd Ret.* God help him! Who's for the great servants'-  
 hall

To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow  
 Lord Tresham into the saloon.

*3rd Ret.* I!—

*4th Ret.* I!—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,  
 Some hint of how the parley goes inside!



Prosperity to the great House once more!  
Here's the last drop!

*1st Ret.*

Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

*Enter* LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN; AUSTIN, *and*  
GUENDOLEN.

*Tresham.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,  
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name  
—Noble among the noblest in itself,  
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,  
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,  
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,  
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,  
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name  
Would win you welcome!—

*Mertoun.*

Thanks!

*Tresh.*

—But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity  
Of your proposal for uniting both  
Our Houses even closer than respect  
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant  
One favor more, nor that the least,—to think  
The welcome I should give;—'tis given! My lord,  
My only brother, Austin: he's the King's.  
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed  
To Austin: all are yours.

*Mer.*

I thank you—less

For the expressed commendings which your seal,  
And only that, authenticates—forbids  
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take  
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,  
Than the indulgent insight it implies  
Of what must needs be uppermost with one  
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,  
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,  
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,  
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,  
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask  
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence

That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,  
 I love your sister—as you'd have one love  
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,  
 Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you know,  
 To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant  
 My true self, me without a rood of land,  
 A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,  
 Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

*Guendolen* [apart to AUSTIN.] Why, this is loving, Austin!

*Aus.* He's so young!

*Guen.* Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise  
 He never had obtained an entrance here,  
 Were all this fear and trembling needed.

*Aus.* Hush!

He reddens.

*Guen.* Mark him, Austin; that's true love!  
 Ours must begin again.

*Tresh.* We'll sit, my lord.  
 Ever with best desert goes diffidence.  
 I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.  
 That I am wholly satisfied with you  
 On this occasion, when a falcon's eye  
 Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,  
 Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give  
 Or to refuse.

*Mer.* But you, you grant my suit?  
 I have your word if hers?

*Tresh.* My best of words  
 If hers encourage you. I trust it will.  
 Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

*Mer.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember,  
 touch;

I have been used to wander carelessly  
 After my stricken game: the heron roused  
 Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing  
 Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours,—or else  
 Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight  
 And lured me after her from tree to tree,  
 I marked not whither. I have come upon  
 The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,  
 And—and then . . . I have seen her.

*Guen.* [aside to *Aus.*]

Note that mode

Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,  
 He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—  
 "On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;  
 Observed a red, where red should not have been,  
 Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough  
 Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk  
 Be lessoned for the future!

*Tresh.*

What's to say

May be said briefly. She has never known  
 A mother's care; I stand for father too.  
 Here beauty is not strange to you, it seems—  
 You cannot know the good and tender heart,  
 Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,  
 How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,  
 How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free  
 As light where friends are—how imbued with lore  
 The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet  
 The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus  
 We brothers talk!

*Mer.*

I thank you.

*Tresh.*

In a word,

Control's not for this lady; but her wish  
 To please me outstrips in its subtlety  
 My power of being pleased: herself creates  
 The wants she means to satisfy. My heart  
 Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.  
 Can I say more?

*Mer.*

No more—thanks, thanks—no more!

*Tresh.* This matter then discussed . . .

*Mer.*

—We'll waste no breath

On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof  
 Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech  
 To you would wander—as it must not do,  
 Since as you favour me I stand or fall.  
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

*Tresh.* With less regret 'tis suffered, that again  
 We meet, I hope, so shortly.

*Mer.*

We? again?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown  
 Your goodness by forthwith apprising me  
 When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint a day  
 For me to wait on you—and her.

*Tresh.*

So soon

As I am made acquainted with her thoughts  
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—  
A messenger shall bring you the result.

*Mer.* You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.  
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew  
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

*Tresh.* So may it prove!

*Mer.*

You, lady, you, sir, take

My humble salutation!

*Guen. and Aus.*

Thanks!

*Tresh.*

Within there!

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door.

*Meantime AUSTIN remarks,*

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,  
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe  
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!  
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—  
She'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?  
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,  
For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—  
Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—  
Then set down what she says, and how she looks,  
And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)  
"Only let her accept me, and do you  
And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

*Guen.* That way you'd take, friend—Austin? What a  
shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first  
Your bride, and all this fervor's run to waste!  
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?  
The Earl's a fool.

*Aus.* Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

*Tresh.* [*returning.*] Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's  
first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud  
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!  
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?  
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,  
As you will never! come—the Earl?

*Guen.*

He's young.

*Tresh.* What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.  
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .  
Austin, how old is she?

*Guen.*

There's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse  
If one should tax him . . .

*Tresh.*

Well?

*Guen.*

—With lacking wit.

*Tresh.* He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so  
please you?

*Guen.* In standing straiter than the steward's rod  
And making you the tiresomest harangue,  
Instead of slipping over to my side  
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,  
Your cousin there will do me detriment  
He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,  
In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave  
My Mildred, when his best account of me  
Is ended, in full confidence I wear  
My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.  
I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

*Tresh.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,  
Of me and my demerits." You are right!  
He should have said what now I say for him.  
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?  
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you  
—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,  
All three of us: she's in the library  
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

*Guen.* Austin, how we must—!

*Tresh.*

Must what? Must speak truth,

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!  
I challenge you!

*Guen.*

Witchcraft's a fault in him,  
For you're bewitched.

*Tresh.*

What's urgent we obtain

Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—  
Next day at farthest.

*Guen.*

Ne'er instruct me!

*Tresh.*

Come!

—He's out of your good graces, since forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm  
 With his perfections! You're for the composed  
 Manly assured becoming confidence!  
 —Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .  
 I'll give you back Urganda, to be spoiled  
 With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S Chamber. *A painted window over-looks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

*Guen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left  
 Our talkers in the library, and climbed  
 The wearisome ascent to this your bower  
 In company with you,—I have nor dared . . .  
 Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you  
 Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,  
 Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell  
 —Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most  
 Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,  
 He would maintain, were gray instead of blue—  
 I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,  
 I have not done such things, (all to deserve  
 A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)  
 To be dismissed so coolly.

*Mil.*

Guendolen!

What have I done? what could suggest . . .

*Guen.*

There, there!

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone  
 To throw those testimonies in a heap,  
 Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,  
 With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's  
 Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses—  
 And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you  
 Nearly a whole night's labor. Ask and have!  
 Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?  
 Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table  
 The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,  
 Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—  
 The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?  
 Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

*Mil.*

My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

*Guen.* If I said only "well" I said not much.  
Oh, stay—which brother?

*Mil.* Thorold! who—who else?

*Guen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—  
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler  
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House  
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance  
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:  
And in the world, the court, if men would cite  
The perfect spirit of honor, Thorold's name  
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.  
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,  
And care no more about what drew it down.  
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;  
Is he content?

*Mil.* You wrong him, Guendolen.

*Guen.* He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er  
The light of his interminable line,  
An ancestry with men all paladins,  
And women all . . .

*Mil.* Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!  
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon  
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

*Guen.* Well, that Thorold  
Should rise up from such musings, and receive  
One come audaciously to graft himself  
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,  
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

*Mil.* Who finds  
A spot in Mertoun?

*Guen.* Not your brother; therefore,  
Not the whole world.

*Mil.* I'm weary, Guendolen.  
Bear with me!

*Guen.* I am foolish.

*Mil.* Oh no, kind!  
But I would rest.

*Guen.* Good night and rest to you!  
I said how gracefully his mantle lay  
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

*Mil.* Brown hair.

*Guen.* Brown? why, it is brown: how could you know that?

*Mil.* How? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas, declared  
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and look,  
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,  
Good night!

*Guen.* Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred!

Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds  
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers  
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame  
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance!

[*Goes.*

*Mil.* Is she—can she be really gone at last?  
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs  
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's  
image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.*

There!

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent  
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!  
Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up

The curse of the beginning; but I know

It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all

To dream my soul away and die upon. [A noise without.

The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake

Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*

*There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;  
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the  
surest:*

*And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of  
lustre*

*Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape  
cluster,*

*Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:  
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling the bird's  
warble!*

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.



*And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights  
were moonless,  
Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's out-  
break tuneless,  
If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!)  
adore her,  
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—*

*[He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.]*

*I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,  
And by noontide as by midnight make her mind, as hers she  
makes me!*

*[The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.]*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

*Mil.* Sit, Henry—do not take my hand!

*Mer.* 'Tis mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much  
Is ended.

*Mil.* What begins now?

*Mer.* Happiness

Such as the world contains not.

*Mil.* That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed  
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we  
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine  
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,  
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,  
And so familiar now; this will not be!

*Mer.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face?  
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,  
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside  
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me  
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last  
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,  
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?  
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break  
On the strange unrest of our night, confused  
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see  
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops

On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,  
 And no expressless glory in the East?  
 When I am by you, to be ever by you,  
 When I have won you and may worship you,  
 Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

*Mil.* Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.

*Mer.* No—me alone, who sinned alone!

*Mil.* The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm  
 Throughout to you then, Henry?

*Mer.* Of your life

I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste  
 A thought about when you are by me?—you  
 It was, I said my folly called the storm  
 And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with me—  
 Perpetual dawn with me.

*Mil.* Come what, come will,  
 You have been happy: take my hand!

*Mer.* [after a pause.] How good  
 Your brother is! I figured him a cold—  
 Shall I say, haughty man?

*Mil.* They told me all.  
 I know all.

*Mer.* It will soon be over.

*Mil.* Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live through  
 And say, "'tis over"? Is our meeting over?  
 Have I received in presence of them all  
 The partner of my guilty love—with brow  
 Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips  
 Which make believe that when they strive to form  
 Replies to you and tremble as they strive,  
 It is the nearest ever they approached  
 A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—  
 With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .  
 Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop  
 This planned piece of deliberate wickedness  
 In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot  
 Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I  
 Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,  
 But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,  
 The love, the shame, and the despair—with them

Round me aghast as round some cursed fount  
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not  
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw  
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace  
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone forever!

*Mer.* Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share  
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract  
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth  
Some better way of saving both of us.

*Mil.* I'll meet their faces, Henry!

*Mer.*

When? to-morrow!

Get done with it!

*Mil.*

Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!

Next day! I never shall prepare my words  
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must  
Despise me!

*Mer.* Mildred, break it if you choose,  
A heart the love of you uplifted—still  
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,  
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace  
The chamber with me—once again—now, say  
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me  
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)  
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off  
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not  
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

*Mil.* Dear Henry!

*Mer.*

I was scarce a boy—e'en now

What am I more? And you were infantine  
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose  
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now  
Only in the recalling how it burned  
That morn to see the shape of many a dream  
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms  
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,  
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,  
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,  
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not  
That now, while I remember every glance  
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test  
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,

Resolved the treasure of a first and last  
 Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,  
 —That now I think upon your purity  
 And utter ignorance of guilt—your own  
 Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised  
 Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk  
 A silly language, but interpret, you!)  
 If I, with fancy at its full, and reason  
 Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,  
 If you had pity on my passion, pity  
 On my protested sickness of the soul  
 To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch  
 Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you  
 Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—  
 If I grew mad at last with enterprise  
 And must behold my beauty in her bower  
 Or perish—(I was ignorant of even  
 My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—  
 Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce  
 My reason, blind myself to light, say truth  
 Is false and lie to God and my own soul?  
 Contempt were all of this!

*Mil.* Do you believe . . .

Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe  
 That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er  
 The past. We'll love on; you will love me still!

*Mer.* Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,  
 Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—  
 Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?  
 Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?  
 Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!  
 Mildred, I love you and you love me.

*Mil.* Go!

Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

*Mer.* This is not our last meeting?

*Mil.* One night more.

*Mer.* And then—think, then!

*Mil.* Then, no sweet courtship-days,  
 No dawning consciousness of love for us,  
 No strange and palpitating births of sense  
 From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,  
 Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

*Mer.* How else should love's perfected noontide follow?  
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mil.* So may it be! but—

You are cautious, Love?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

*Mer.* Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed  
To-morrow night?

*Mil.* Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?  
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf  
Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs  
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.  
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my Love!  
He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every word!  
I was so young, I loved him so, I had  
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.  
There may be pardon yet: all's doubt beyond.  
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

## ACT II

SCENE.—*The Library.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM, hastily.*

*Tresham.* This way—In, Gerard, quick!

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.*

Now speak! or, wait—  
[*Seats himself.*

I'll bid you speak directly.

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale  
You've just now told me; it eludes me; either  
I did not listen, or the half is gone  
Away from me. How long have you lived here?  
Here in my house, your father kept our woods  
Before you?

*Ger.* —As his father did, my lord.  
I have been eating, sixty years almost,  
Your bread.

*Tresh.* Yes, yes. You ever were of all  
The servants in my father's house, I know,  
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

*Ger.* I'll speak  
 God's truth. Night after night . . .  
*Tresh.* Since when?  
*Ger.* At least  
 A month—each midnight has some man access  
 To Lady Mildred's chamber.  
*Tresh.* Tush, "access"—  
 No wide words like "access" to me!  
*Ger.* He runs  
 Along the woodside, crosses to the South,  
 Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .  
*Tresh.* The last great yew-tree?  
*Ger.* You might stand upon  
 The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .  
*Tresh.* Quick!  
*Ger.* Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,  
 —I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,  
 I think—for this I do not vouch—a line  
 That reaches to the lady's casement—  
*Tresh.* —Which  
 He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool  
 Dares pry into my sister's privacy!  
 When such are young, it seems a precious thing  
 To have approached,—to merely have approached,  
 Got sight of, the abode of her they set  
 Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?  
 Gerard?  
*Ger.* There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,  
 Under a red square in the painted glass  
 Of Lady Mildred's . . .  
*Tresh.* Leave that name out! Well?  
 That lamp?  
*Ger.* —Is moved at midnight higher up  
 To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits  
 For that among the boughs: at sight of that,  
 I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,  
 Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .  
*Tresh.* —And stay?  
*Ger.* An hour, two hours.  
*Tresh.* And this you saw  
 Once?—twice?—quick!

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you  
Under the yew-trees?

Ger. The first night I left  
My range so far, to track the stranger stag  
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent  
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Ger. But  
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,  
In a great moonlight, light as any day  
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no cause  
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once  
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted  
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net  
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned  
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire  
If down I flung myself and strove to die.  
The lady could not have been seven years old  
When I was trusted to conduct her safe  
Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn  
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand  
Within a month. She ever had a smile  
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo  
What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .  
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—  
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt  
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed  
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food  
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,  
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts  
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed  
Either I must confess to you, or die:  
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm  
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

Tresh. No—  
No, Gerard!

Ger. Let me go!

Tresh. A man, you say:  
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?

*Ger.* A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak  
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;  
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!

*Tresh.* Why?

*Ger.* He is ever armed: his sword projects  
Beneath the cloak.

*Tresh.* Gerard,—I will not say  
No word, no breath of this!

*Ger.* Thanks, thanks, my lord!

[*Goes.*]

*Tresh.* [*Paces the room. After a pause.*]

Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact  
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give  
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,  
The waters and the green delights of earth,  
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—  
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,  
And yield my reason up, inadequate  
To reconcile what yet I do behold—  
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside:  
This is my library, and this the chair  
My father used to sit in carelessly  
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood  
Between his knees to question him: and here  
Gerard our gray retainer,—as he says,  
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—  
Has told a story—I am to believe!  
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,  
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!  
Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound  
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven  
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here  
Until thought settle and I see my course.  
Avert, Oh God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table, GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at the door.*]

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord Tresham there?

[*TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.*]

*Tresh.*

Come in! [*She enters.*]

Ha, Guendolen! good morning.



*Guen.* Nothing more?

*Tresh.* What should I say more?

*Guen.* Pleasant question! more?

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain  
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"  
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate  
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,  
What is all this? You are not well!

*Tresh.* Who, I?

You laugh at me.

*Guen.* Has what I'm fain to hope,  
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot  
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back  
Than Arthur's time?

*Tresh.* When left you Mildred's chamber?

*Guen.* Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing  
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,  
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon  
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

*Tresh.* Send her here!

*Guen.* Thorold?

*Tresh.* I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,  
—But mildly!

*Guen.* Mildly?

*Tresh.* Ah, you guess'd aright!  
I am not well: there is no hiding it.  
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—  
That is, at once! here in the library!  
The passage in that old Italian book  
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—  
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,  
That she must come—and instantly!

*Guen.* I'll die  
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed  
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

*Tresh.* Go! or, Guendolen,  
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—  
In the adjoining gallery! There, go! [GUENDOLEN goes.  
Another lesson to me! You might bid  
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct  
Some sly investigation point by point  
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise!  
 If you had told me yesterday, "There's one  
 You needs must circumvent and practise with,  
 Entrap by policies, if you would worm  
 The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!" There,  
 There—reasoning is thrown away on it!  
 Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove  
 That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!  
 Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say.  
 Or do, or think. Force on me but the first  
 Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,  
 And I shall ne'er make count of them!

*Enter MILDRED.*

*Mil.* What book  
 Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen  
 Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?  
 That's Latin surely.

*Tresh.* Mildred, here's a line,  
 (Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)  
 "Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?  
 What love should you esteem—best love?

*Mil.* True love.

*Tresh.* I mean, and should have said, whose love is best  
 Of all that love or that profess to love?

*Mil.* The list's so long: there's father's, mother's, hus-  
 band's . . .

*Tresh.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's love  
 For a sole sister must exceed them all.  
 For see now, only see! there's no alloy  
 Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold  
 Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;  
 You never gave her life, not even aught  
 That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,  
 Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right  
 O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I call  
 Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope  
 To be such friends, for instance, she and you,  
 As when you hunted cowslips in the woods  
 Or played together in the meadow hay.  
 Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,  
 There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:  
 —Much head these make against the new-comer!  
 The startling apparition, the strange youth—  
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,  
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change  
 This Ovid ever sang about!) your soul  
 . . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her  
 'Twas winter yesterday; now all is warmth,  
 The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,  
 "Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far  
 Enough from the esteem, respect, and all  
 The brother's somewhat insignificant  
 Array of rights! All which he knows before,  
 Has calculated on so long ago!  
 I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)  
 Contented with its little term of life,  
 Intending to retire betimes, aware  
 How soon the background must be place for it,  
 —I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds  
 All the world's love in its unworldliness.

*Mil.* What is this for?

*Tresh.*

This, Mildred, is it for!

Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon!  
 That's one of many points my haste left out—  
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film  
 Between the being tied to you by birth,  
 And you, until those slender threads compose  
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes  
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:  
 So close you live and yet so far apart!  
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down  
 The sweet and palpitating mystery  
 That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,  
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

*Mil.*

Speak!

*Tresh.*

I will.

Is there a story men could—any man  
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?  
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.  
 Say "There is no such story men could tell,"  
 And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve

The world—the world of better men than I,  
 And women such as I suppose you. Speak!  
 [*After a pause.*] Not speak? Explain then! clear it up then!  
 Move

Some of the miserable weight away  
 That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?  
 Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I  
 Could bring myself to plainly make their charge  
 Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?  
 [*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night  
 Admittance to your chamber?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name!  
 Till now, I only had a thought for you:  
 But now,—his name!

*Mil.* Thorold, do you devise  
 Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit  
 There be! 'Tis nought to say that I'll endure  
 And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge  
 Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:  
 But do not plunge me into other guilt!  
 Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

*Tresh.* Then judge yourself! How should I act?  
 Pronounce!

*Mil.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!  
 To die here in this chamber by that sword  
 Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,  
 Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!  
 'Twere easily arranged for me: but you—  
 What would become of you?

*Tresh.* And what will now  
 Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine  
 From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts  
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor;  
 They cannot rise and blast you! You may wed  
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb;  
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.  
 We two will somehow wear this one day out:  
 But with tomorrow hastens here—the Earl!  
 The youth without suspicion . . . face can come  
 From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence proceed such  
 hearts?

I have despatched last night at your command  
 A missive bidding him present himself  
 To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest  
 Is understood as if 'twere written down—  
 "His suit finds favour in your eyes." Now dictate  
 This morning's letter that shall countermand  
 Last night's—do dictate that!

*Mil.* But, Thorold—if  
 I will receive him as I said?

*Tresh.* The Earl?

*Mil.* I will receive him.

*Tresh.* [*Starting up.*] Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!  
 The woman there!

*Aus. and Guen.* How? Mildred?

*Tresh.* Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep  
 Blesses the inmates of her father's house,  
 —I say, the soft sly wanton that receives  
 Her guilt's accomplice neath this roof which holds  
 You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held  
 A thousand Treshams—never one like her!  
 No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick  
 Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness  
 To mix with breath as foul! no loosener  
 Of the lattice, practiced in the stealthy tread,  
 The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!  
 Not one composer of the bacchant's mien  
 Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!  
 Know her!

*Guen.* Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!  
 Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands  
 Rigid as stone and whiter!

*Tresh.* You have heard

*Guen.* Too much! you must proceed no further.

*Mil.*

Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!

*Tresh.* All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,

Yes—

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con  
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take  
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,  
I'd bind myself before them to exact  
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,  
The sight of her, the bare least memory  
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride  
Above all prides, my all in all so long,  
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.  
What were it silently to waste away  
And see her waste away from this day forth,  
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,  
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die  
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?  
It were not so impossible to bear.  
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed  
Of love with the successful gallant there,  
She calmly bids me help her to entice,  
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth  
Who thinks her all that's chaste and good and pure,  
—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit  
As honor's self to cover shame's arch-deed?  
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—  
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,  
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,  
“Talk not to me of torture—I'll betray  
No comrade I've pledged faith to!”—you have heard  
Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied  
By wild illicit ties to losels vile  
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply  
“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find  
In him, why should I leave him then for gold,  
Repute or friends?”—and you have felt your heart  
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world  
As to so many friends; bad as you please,  
You've felt they were God's men and women still,  
So, not to be disowned by you. But she  
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up  
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide  
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,  
I curse her to her face before you all.  
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right

To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.]

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen.

We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? why, where's my place

But by her side, and where yours but by mine?

Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.

She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen.

Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I

Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing

At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make

The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,

—If with a death-white woman you can help,

Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,

You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend

This morning, playfellow but yesterday,

Who've said, or thought at least a thousand times,

"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round

And say, "Ah, that's to only signify

I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself:

So long as fifty eyes await the turn

Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,

I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—

When every tongue is praising you, I'll join

The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about

With lives between you and detraction—lives

To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,

Rough hand should violate the sacred ring

Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,

Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so

We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there

Would be unworthy to behold us both,

But we should be unworthy, both of us,

To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,

Which, if that sword were broken in your face

Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,

And you cast out with hooting and contempt,

—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain

Your side, go off with you and all your shame

To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,  
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's  
Your brother says he does not believe half—  
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,  
Look up and take his hand!

*Aus.*

Look up and take

My hand, dear Mildred!

*Mil.*

I—I was so young!

Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had  
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

*Guen.* Mildred!

*Mil.*

Require no further! Did I dream

That I could palliate what is done? All's true.

Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?

Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.

I thought that Thorold told you.

*Guen.*

What is this?

Where start you to?

*Mil.*

Oh, Austin, loosen me!

You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless

You stay to execute his sentence, loose

My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

*Guen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait

Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!

Only, when you shall want your bidding done,

How can we do it if we are not by?

Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!

One spirit to command, and one to love

And to believe in it and do its best,

Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world

Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,

By just such a beginning!

*Mil.*

I believe

If once I threw my arms about your neck

And sunk my head upon your breast, that I

Should weep again.

*Guen.*

Let go her hand now, Austin!

Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think

On the world's seemings and realities,

Until I call you.

[AUSTIN goes.]



*Mil.* No—I cannot weep.  
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!  
O Guendolen, I love you!

*Guen.* Yes: and “love”  
Is a short word that says so very much!  
It says that you confide in me.

*Mil.* Confide!  
*Guen.* Your lover’s name, then! I’ve so much to learn,  
Ere I can work in your behalf!

*Mil.* My friend,  
You know I cannot tell his name.

*Guen.* At least  
He is your lover? and you love him too?

*Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen  
So low!

*Guen.* You love him still, then?

*Mil.* My sole prop  
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,  
Each night ere I lie down, “I was so young—  
I had no mother, and I loved him so!”  
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare  
Trust him my soul in sleep.

*Guen.* How could you let us  
E’en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?

*Mil.* There is a cloud around me.

*Guen.* But you said  
You would receive his suit in spite of this?

*Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .

*Guen.* No cloud to me!  
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

*Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .

*Guen.* [calling aloud.] Austin! (spare your pains—  
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

*Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!  
Have I confided in you . . .

*Guen.* Just for this!  
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!  
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,  
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else  
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap  
Of sins which had been irredeemable?  
I felt they were not yours—what other way

Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

*Mil.* If you would see me die before his face . . .

*Guen.* I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns  
To-night?

*Mil.* Ah Heaven, he's lost!

*Guen.* I thought so! Austin!

*Enter AUSTIN.*

Oh, where have you been hiding?

*Aus.* Thorold's gone,

I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts

Of the beech-wood.

*Guen.* Gone? All thwarts us.

*Mil.* Thorold too?

*Guen.* I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her  
room.

Go on the other side; and then we'll seek

Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,

The greatest comfort in the world. You said

There was a clew to all. Remember, Sweet,

He said there was a clew! I hold it. Come!

### ACT III

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S  
window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

*Enter TRESHAM through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.

The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades

And dells and bosky paths which used to lead

Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering

My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend

Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade

Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,

And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts

Again my step; the very river put

Its arm about me and conducted me .

To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun

Their will no longer: do your will with me!  
 Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme  
 Of happiness, and to behold it razed,  
 Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes  
 Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.  
 But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours  
 No horrid prodigy like this would spring,  
 Were just as though I hoped that from these old  
 Confederates against the sovereign day,  
 Children of older and yet older sires,  
 Whose living coral berries dropped, as now  
 On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,  
 On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed  
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,  
 Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.  
 Why came I here? What must I do? [*A bell strikes.*] A  
 bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch  
 —Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,  
 And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter  
 MERTOUN cloaked as before.*]

*Mer.* Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat  
 Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock  
 I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through  
 The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise  
 My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!  
 So much the more delicious task to watch  
 Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,  
 All traces of the rough forbidden path  
 My rash loved lured her to! Each day must see  
 Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:  
 Then there will be surprises, unforeseen  
 Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.

[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*]

And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!  
 I never saw it lovelier than now  
 It rises for the last time. If it sets,  
 'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.  
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck  
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath  
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.  
*Tresh.* Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!  
Out of the shadow!

*Mer.* I am armed, fool!

*Tresh.* Yes,  
Or no? You'll come into the light, or no?  
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

*Mer.* That voice!  
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.  
I'll come with you. [*They advance.*]

*Tresh.* You're armed: that's well. Declare  
Your name: who are you?

*Mer.* (Tresham!—she is lost!)

*Tresh.* Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself  
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had  
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look  
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!  
The bravo holds an assured countenance,  
The thief is voluble and plausible,  
But silently the slave of lust has crouched  
When I have fancied it before a man.  
Your name!

*Mer.* I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,  
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—  
That he for his own sake forbear to ask  
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal  
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!  
I read your white inexorable face.  
Know me, Lord Tresham!

[*He throws off his disguises.*]

*Tresh.* Mertoun!  
[*After a pause.*] Draw now!

*Mer.* Hear me  
But speak first!

*Tresh.* Not one least word on your life!  
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat

The least word that informs me how you live  
 And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 'twas you  
 Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.  
 We should join hands in frantic sympathy  
 If you once taught me the unteachable,  
 Explained how you can live so, and so lie.  
 With God's help I retain, despite my sense,  
 The old belief—a life like yours is still  
 Impossible. Now draw!

*Mer.* Not for my sake,  
 Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,  
 And most, for her sake!

*Tresh.* Ha ha, what should I  
 Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,  
 How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that's pride  
 No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?  
 Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits  
 Into his face! Come! which, or all of these?

*Mer.* 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!  
 Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

*[He draws and, after a few passes, falls.]*

*Tresh.* You are not hurt?

*Mer.* You'll hear me now!

*Tresh.* But rise!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me now!"  
 And what procures a man the right to speak  
 In his defence before his fellow man,  
 But—I suppose—the thought that presently  
 He may have leave to speak before his God  
 His whole defence?

*Tresh.* Not hurt? It cannot be!  
 You made no effort to resist me. Where  
 Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned  
 My thrusts? Hurt where?

*Mer.* My lord—

*Tresh.* How young he is!

*Mer.* Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet  
 I have entangled other lives with mine.  
 Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!  
 That when I die before you presently,—

*Tresh.* Can you stay here till I return with help?

*Mer.* Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy

I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—  
 Upon my honor, knew it not! Once known,  
 I could not find what seemed a better way  
 To right you than I took: my life—you feel  
 How less than nothing were the giving you  
 The life you've taken! But I thought my way  
 The better—only for your sake and hers:  
 And as you have decided otherwise,  
 Would I had an infinity of lives  
 To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!  
 Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,  
 Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!  
 For I must wring a partial—dare I say,  
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

*Tresh.*

I do

Forgive you.

*Mer.*

Wait and ponder that great word!)

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope  
 To speak to you of—Mildred!

*Tresh.*

Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you  
 Should tell me for a novelty you're young,  
 Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.  
 Be but your pardon ample as my own!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop  
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about!  
 Why, 'twas my very fear of you, my love  
 Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one  
 Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—  
 You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,  
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned  
 To knit myself to you: but I was young,  
 And your surpassing reputation kept me  
 So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?  
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday  
 Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,  
 Had taken place perchance six months ago.  
 Even now, how happy we had been! And yet  
 I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!  
 Let me look up into your face; I feel

'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.  
Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?

Tresham, her life is bound up in the life  
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live—must live,  
There, if you'll only turn me I shall live  
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!  
Had you but heard! What right was your's to set  
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,  
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,  
All had gone otherwise"? We've sinned and die:  
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,  
And God will judge you.

*Tresh.*

Yes, be satisfied!

That process is begun.

*Mer.*

And she sits there  
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—  
You, not another—say, I saw him die  
As he breathed this, "I love her"—you don't know  
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her  
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death  
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,  
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,  
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,  
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape  
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,  
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds  
Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,  
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,  
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—  
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear  
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave  
Their honorable world to them! For God  
We're good enough, though the world casts us out.

*[A whistle is heard.]*

*Tresh.* Ho, Gerard!

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and GUENDOLEN, with lights.*

No one speak! you see what's done.  
I cannot bear another voice.

*Mer.*

There's light—

Light all about me, and I move to it.  
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not  
Just promise to deliver words of mine  
To Mildred?

*Tresh.* I will bear those words to her.

*Mer.* Now?

*Tresh.* Now. Lift you the body, and leave me  
The head.

*[As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.]*

*Mer.* I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!  
There! stay you! there! *[Dies.]*

*Guen.* *[after a pause.]* Austin, remain you here  
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:  
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go  
To Mildred.

*Tresh.* Guendolen, I hear each word  
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give  
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,  
And only I, see Mildred.

*Guen.* She will die.

*Tresh.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope  
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?  
Why, Austin's with you!

*Aus.* Had we but arrived  
Before you fought!

*Tresh.* There was no fight at all.  
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll trust  
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!  
Now bear him on before me.

*Aus.* Whither bear him?

*Tresh.* Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,  
We shall be friends.

*[They bear out the body of MERTOUN.]*  
Will she die, Guendolen?

*Guen.* Where are you taking me?

*Tresh.* He fell just here.  
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life  
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,  
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,  
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?  
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm  
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade



Be ever on the meadow and the waste—  
 Another kind of shade than when the night  
 Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?  
 But will you ever so forget his breast  
 As carelessly to cross this bloody turf  
 Under the black yew avenue? That's well!  
 You turn your head: and I then?—

*Guen.*

What is done

Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,  
 Bear up against this burden: more remains  
 To set the neck to!

*Tresh.*

Dear and ancient trees

My fathers planted, and I loved so well!  
 What have I done that, like some fabled crime  
 Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus  
 Her miserable dance amidst you all?  
 Oh, never more for me shall winds intone  
 With all your tops a vast antiphony,  
 Demanding and responding in God's praise!  
 Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—Farewell!

## SCENE II.—MILDRED'S Chamber.

MILDRED *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed  
 Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought  
 Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet  
 Did they so gather up their diffused strength  
 At her first menace, that they bade her strike,  
 And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.  
 Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,  
 And the rest fall upon it, not on me.  
 Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails  
 Just this first night out of so many nights?  
 Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,  
 As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love  
 No more—contrive no thousand happy ways  
 To hide love from the loveless, any more.  
 I think I might have urged some little point  
 In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless  
 For the least hint of a defence: but no,  
 The first shame over, all that would might fall.  
 No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept  
 Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost  
 Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon  
 Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,  
 Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world  
 Forsakes me: only Henry's left me—left?  
 When I have lost him, for he does not come,  
 And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven, break up  
 This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,  
 By any means or any messenger!

*Tresh.* [*without.*] Mildred!

*Mil.* Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*Enter TRESHAM.*] You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

*Tresh.* Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

*Mil.* Say it, Thorold—do not look

The curse! deliver all you come to say!

What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought

Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

*Tresh.* My thought?

*Mil.* All of it!

*Tresh.* How we waded—years ago—

After those water-lilies, till the plash,

I know not how, surprised us; and you dared

Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood

Laughing and crying until Gerard came—

Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,

For once more reaching the relinquished prize!

How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!

Mildred,—

*Mil.* You call me kindlier by my name

Than even yesterday: what is in that?

*Tresh.* It weighs so much upon my mind that I

This morning took an office not my own!

I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing

That touches you. I may with a wrung heart

Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:

Will you forgive me?

*Mil.* Thorold? do you mock?

Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

*Tresh.* Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, Sweet?

*Mil.* [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!

You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

*Tresh.* He bade me tell you. . . .

*Mil.* What I do forbid

Your utterance of! So much that you may tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more

Than bleeding out his life there: must I say

"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

*Tresh.* You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:

Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom

I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

*Mil.* Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True!

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.

Death makes me sure of him for ever! You

Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,

And take my answer—not in words, but reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,

Which death . . .

*Tresh.* Death? you are dying too? Well said

Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:

But she was sure of it.

*Mil.* Tell Guendolen

I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

*Tresh.* Him you loved:

And me?

*Mil.* Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly done

To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope

And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach

While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly

You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath

And respite me!—you let him try to give  
 The story of our love and ignorance,  
 And the brief madness and the long despair—  
 You let him plead all this, because your code  
 Of honor bids you hear before you strike:  
 But at the end, as he looked up for life  
 Into your eyes—you struck him down!

*Tresh.*

No! no!

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak  
 Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him  
 I had desisted! Why, as he lay theré,  
 The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all  
 The story ere he told it: I saw through  
 The troubled surface of his crime and yours  
 A depth of purity immovable,  
 Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest  
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;  
 I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.  
 There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—  
 You curse me?

*Mil.*

As I dare approach that Heaven  
 Which has not bade a living thing despair,  
 Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,  
 But bids the vilest worm that turns on it  
 Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,  
 But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[*Falls on his neck.*]

There! Do not think too much upon the past!  
 The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud  
 While it stood up between my friend and you;  
 You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that  
 So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;  
 I may dispose of it: I give it you!  
 It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

[*Dies.*]

*Tresh.* I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad  
 In thy full gladness!

*Guen.* [*without.*] Mildred! Tresham!

[*Entering with AUSTIN.*]

Thorold,

I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!  
 That's well.

*Tresh.* Oh! better far than that!

*Guen.*

She's dead!

Let me unlock her arms!

*Tresh.* She threw them thus  
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:  
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

*Aus.* Leave her  
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

*Guen.* White  
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!

*Aus.* A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;  
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:  
Speak, dearest Thorold!

*Tresh.* Something does weigh down  
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall  
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,  
'Twill pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:  
I am dying.

*Guen.* Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

*Tresh.* I said, just as I drank the poison off,  
The earth would be no longer earth to me,  
The life out of all life was gone from me.  
There are blind ways provided, the foredone  
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world  
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile  
By the conspicuous portal: I am through—  
Just through!

*Guen.* Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.

*Tresh.* Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.  
I see you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand,  
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!  
You're lord and lady now—you're Treshams; name  
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.  
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood  
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came  
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye  
All's gules again: no care to the vain world,  
From whence the red was drawn!

*Aus.* No blot shall come!

*Tresh.* I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,  
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! [*Dies.*]

*Guen.* [*letting fall the pulseless arm.*] Ah, Thorold, we can  
but—remember you!

(1843.)

## IN A BALCONY

*Persons.*

NORBERT.

CONSTANCE.

THE QUEEN.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

*Norbert.* Now!*Constance.* Not now!

*Norbert.* Give me them again, those hands:  
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!  
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!  
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,  
Let me! The Queen must grant whate'er I ask—  
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?  
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you;  
Some time or other this was to be asked;  
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain:  
Let me ask now, Love!

*Constance.* Do, and ruin us!

*Norbert.* Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.  
How I do love you! Give my love its way!  
A man can have but one life and one death,  
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—  
Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,  
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,  
Hold you and have you, and then die away,  
If God please, with completion in my soul!

*Constance.* I am not yours then? How content this man!  
I am not his—who change into himself,  
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,  
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,  
Give all that was of me away to him—  
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,  
Takes part with him against the woman here,  
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw  
As caring that the world be cognisant  
How he loves her and how she worships him.  
You have this woman, not as yet that world.  
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me  
By saving what I cease to care about,

The courtly name and pride of circumstance—  
 The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with  
 Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;  
 Just that the world may slip from under you—  
 Just that the world may cry, "So much for him—  
 The man predestined to the heap of crowns:  
 There goes his chance of winning one, at least!"

*Norbert.* The world!

*Constance.* You love it! Love me quite as well,  
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain!  
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

*Norbert.* You pray for—what, in vain?

*Constance.* Oh my heart's heart,  
 How I do love you, Norbert! That is right:  
 But listen, or I take my hands away!  
 You say, "let it be now": you would go now  
 And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,  
 You love me—so you do, thank God!

*Norbert.*

Thank God!

*Constance.* Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your  
 love,  
 And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her  
 My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,  
 Listening to me. You are the minister,  
 The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.  
 To-night completes your wonderful year's-work  
 (This palace-feast is held to celebrate)  
 Made memorable by her life's success,  
 The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,  
 Her house had only dreamed of anciently:  
 That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,  
 To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?  
 Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved  
 What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?  
 You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.  
 Next comes the Queen's turn. "Name your own reward!"  
 With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,  
 Put out an arm and touch and take the sun  
 And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,  
 Possess yourself supremely of her life,—  
 You choose the single thing she will not grant;  
 Nay, very declaration of which choice

Will turn the scale and neutralise your work:

At best she will forgive you, if she can.

You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

*Norbert.* Wait. First, do you retain your old belief  
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

*Constance.*

There, there!

So men make women love them, while they know

No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,

You that are just and generous beside.

Make it your own case! For example now,

I'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—

Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—

The kiss, because you have a name at court;

This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.

That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen—

Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak.

"I was a nameless man; you needed me:

Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood

A certain pretty cousin at your side.

Why did I make such common cause with you?

Access to her had not been easy else.

You give my labor here abundant praise?

'Faith, labor, which she overlooked, grew play.

How shall your gratitude discharge itself?

Give me her hand!"

*Norbert.*

And still I urge the same.

Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

*Constance.* Yes, just. You love a rose: no harm in that:

But was it for the rose's sake or mine

You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—

Then, mine you still must say or else be false.

You told the Queen you served her for herself;

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,

She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!

I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,

One sees the twenty pictures: there's a life

Better than life, and yet no life at all.

Conceive her born in such a magic dome,

Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,

Can recognise its given things and facts,

The fight of giants or the feast of gods,



Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,  
 Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,  
 Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—  
 And who shall question that she knows them all,  
 In better semblance than the things outside?  
 Yet bring into the silent gallery  
 Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,  
 Some lion, with the painted lion there—  
 You think she'll understand composedly?  
 —Say, "That's his fellow in the hunting-piece  
 Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?"  
 Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,  
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,  
 Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.  
 The real exists for us outside, not her:  
 How should it, with that life in these four walls,  
 That father and that mother, first to last  
 No father and no mother—friends, a heap,  
 Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,  
 And every one of them alike a lie!  
 Things painted by a Rubens<sup>1</sup> out of nought  
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;  
 All better, all more grandiose than the life,  
 Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,  
 You feel, while you admire. How should she feel?  
 Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years  
 The sole spectator in that gallery,  
 You think to bring this warm real struggling love  
 In to her of a sudden, and suppose  
 She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—  
 She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,  
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?  
 You only have to say "So men are made,  
 For this they act; the thing has many names,  
 But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!"  
 Your life slips back; you lose her at the word:  
 You do not even for amends gain me.  
 He will not understand; oh, Norbert, Norbert,  
 Do you not understand?

*Norbert.*

The Queen's the Queen;

<sup>1</sup> Greatest of Flemish painters (1577-1640).

I am myself—no picture, but alive  
In every nerve and every muscle, here  
At the palace-window o'er the people's street,  
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:  
The good of life is precious to us both.  
She cannot love; what do I want with rule?  
When first I saw your face a year ago  
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—  
"The woman yonder, there's no use of life  
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes in one  
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys  
And spurn them, as they help or help not this  
Only, obtain her!" How was it to be?  
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;  
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.  
No other way. Suppose there had been one,  
And I, by saying prayers to some white star  
With promise of my body and my soul,  
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?  
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,  
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.  
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.  
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,—  
I therefore name you as that recompense.  
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?  
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause  
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?  
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives  
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too;  
I worked because I want you with my soul:  
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!

*Constance.* Had I not loved you from the very first,  
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus  
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,  
You might become impatient. What's conceived  
Of us without here, by the folk within?  
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—  
Where am I now? intent on festal robes—  
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!  
What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours  
Which broke the council up?—to bring about  
One minute's meeting in the corridor?

And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,  
Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,  
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,  
“Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?”

A year of this compression's ecstasy  
All goes for nothing! you would give this up  
For the old way, the open way, the world's,  
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!  
What tempts you?—their notorious happiness  
Makes you ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain  
Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,  
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you  
And me at once, and gives us ample leave  
To live like our five hundred happy friends.  
The world will show us with officious hand  
Our chamber-entry, and stand sentinel  
Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!  
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet,  
And make it duty to be bold and swift,  
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!  
We never hawked by rights till flung from fist?  
Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.

*Norbert.* Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which  
is more—

One made to love you, let the world take note!  
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,  
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against  
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!  
Set free my love, and see what love can do  
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!  
The world is used to have its business done  
On other grounds, find great effects produce  
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.  
So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!  
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!  
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!  
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,  
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,  
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,  
That men may see, all over, you in me—  
That pale loves may die out of their pretence  
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.

Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long  
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,  
That now 'tis all of me and must have way.  
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,  
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,  
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,  
Trembling at last to its assured result:  
Then think of this revulsion! I resume  
Life after death, (it is no less than life,  
After such long unlovely laboring days,)  
And liberate to beauty life's great need  
O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,  
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,  
This eve intense with yon first trembling star  
We seem to pant and reach; scarce ought between  
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;  
All nature self-abandoned, every tree  
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts  
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,  
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;  
All under God, each measured by itself.  
These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,  
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,  
The Muse forever wedded to her lyre,  
The Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her rose:  
See God's approval on his universe!  
Let us do so—aspire to live as these  
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!  
Take the first way, and let the second come!  
My first is to possess myself of you;  
The music sets the march-step—forward, then!  
And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,  
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.  
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!  
*Constance.* And so shall we be ruined, both of us.  
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:  
You do not know her, were not born to it,  
To feel what she can see or cannot see.  
Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,  
Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame  
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,  
There lived a lavish soul until it starved,

Debarred of healthy food. Look to the soul—  
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin  
(The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,  
Exactions and acquittance of the past!  
Begin so—see what justice she will deal!  
We women hate a debt as men a gift.  
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school  
Whose business is to sit through summer-months  
And dole out children leave to go and play,  
Herself superior to such lightness—she  
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp—  
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside:  
We wonder such a face looks black on us?  
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,  
(That were vain truly—none is left to wake,)  
But, let her think her justice is engaged  
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark  
If she'll not coldly pay its warmest debt!  
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:  
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged  
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—  
Did more on that bare ground than other loves  
Would do on greater argument. For me,  
I have no equivalent of such cold kind  
To pay her with, but love alone to give  
If I give anything. I give her love:  
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.  
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice  
That women hate a debt as men a gift.  
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—  
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,  
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—  
Declaring my success was recompense;  
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?  
And then, once loose her generosity,—  
Oh, how I see it!—then, were I but you  
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,  
And make it offer what I really take,  
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,  
Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—  
Since none love queens directly, none dare that,  
And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo

Suffices those who miss the name and thing!  
 You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,  
 To keep in proof how near her breath you came.  
 Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—  
 Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand,)  
 You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,  
 Which, if you make the least show to extort . . .  
 —You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,  
 Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

*Norbert.* Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?  
 'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth:  
 Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,  
 Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.  
 Will you remain here?

*Constance.* O best heart of mine,  
 How I have loved you! then, you take my way?  
 Are mine as you have been her minister,  
 Work out my thought, give it effect for me,  
 Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?  
 I owe that withered woman everything—  
 Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—  
 Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?  
 You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?  
 Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

*Norbert.* Remain here. How you know me!

*Constance.*

Ah, but still—

*[He breaks from her; she remains. Dance-music from within.]*

*Enter the QUEEN*

*Queen.* Constance? She is here as he said. Speak quick!  
 Is it so? Is it true or false? One word!

*Constance.* True.

*Queen.* Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

*Constance.* Madam?

*Queen.* I love you, Constance, from my soul.  
 Now say once more, with any words you will,  
 'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

*Constance.* Why should you doubt it?

*Queen.* Ah, why doubt? why doubt?  
 Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?

None see themselves; another sees them best.  
 You say "why doubt it?"—you see him and me.  
 It is because the Mother has such grace  
 That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—  
 Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;  
 Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,  
 Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and power,  
 And while accepting life, abjure its use.  
 Constance, I had abjured the hope of love  
 And being loved as truly as yon palm  
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

*Constance.* Heaven!

*Queen.* . . . But it was so, Constance, it was so!  
 Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—  
 "Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.  
 Too late—no love for you, too late for love—  
 Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!"  
 One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,  
 Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.

"Oh love, true, never think of love again!  
 I am a queen: I rule, not love, forsooth."  
 So it goes on; so a face grows like this,  
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,  
 Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

*Constance.* I cannot understand——

*Queen.* . . . The happier you!  
 Constance, I know not how it is with men:  
 For women (I am a woman now like you)  
 There is no good of life but love—but love!  
 What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;  
 Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,  
 Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,  
 Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!  
 O Constance, how I love you!

*Constance.* . . . I love you.

*Queen.* I do believe that all is come through you.  
 I took you to my heart to keep it warm  
 When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;  
 I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.  
 Oh, I am very old now, am I not?  
 Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

*Constance.* Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

*Queen.* Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me  
And say, "she's old, she's grown unlovely quite  
Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still."  
Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure!

*Constance.* Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

*Queen.* Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—  
Do not I stand and see men come and go?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal  
Where I grow marble—"one young man the more!

He will love some one; that is nought to me:

What would he with my marble stateliness?"

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god, .

And I still older, with less flesh to change—

We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began

To labor at those state-affairs, absorbed

The old way for the old end—interest.

Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts

Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,

Professing they've no care but for your cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,—

And you the marble statue all the time

They praise and point at as preferred to life,

Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,

First dancer's, gypsy's or street baladine's!

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,

Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,

Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!

There have been moments, if the sentinel

Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,

Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,

I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

*Constance.* Who could have comprehended?

*Queen.* Ay, who—who?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps



It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

*Constance.* I wait to tell it.

*Queen.*

Well, you see, he came,

Outfaced the others, did a work this year

Exceeds in value all was ever done,

You know—it is not I who say it—all

Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)

I grew aware not only of what he did,

But why so wondrously. Oh, never work

Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!

I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.

And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

*Constance.* Me, madam?

*Queen.*

It did seem to me, your face

Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you

Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved his love,

And both of you were in intelligence.

You could not loiter in that garden, step

Into this balcony, but I straight was stung

And forced to understand. It seemed so true,

So right, so beautiful, so like you both,

That all this work should have been done by him

Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,

But that at last—suppose, some night like this—

Borne on to claim his due reward of me,

He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."

And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)

I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,

—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest,

My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,

My happiest woman's self that might have been!

These two shall have their joy and leave me here."

Yes—yes!

*Constance.* Thanks!

*Queen.*

And the word was on my lips

When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear

A mere calm statement of his just desire

For payment of his labor. When—O Heaven,

How can I tell you? lightning on my eyes

And thunder in my ears proved that first word  
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—  
He loved me—from the first step to the last,  
Loved me!

*Constance.* You hardly saw, scarce heard him speak  
Of love: what if you should mistake?

*Queen.* No, no—  
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!  
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—  
You were my reflex—(how I understood!)  
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,  
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,  
And love, love come at end of every phrase.  
Love is begun; this much is come to pass:  
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours!  
I will learn, I will place my life on you,  
Teach me but how to keep what I have won!  
Am I so old? This hair was early gray;  
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,  
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.  
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.  
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,  
Beautiful—for the last French painter did!  
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—  
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!  
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out  
And set her by their side to take the eye:  
I must have felt that good would come from you.  
I am not generous—like him—like you!  
But he is not your lover after all:  
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?  
You have not been mistaking words or looks?  
He said you were the reflex of myself.  
And yet he is not such a paragon  
To you, to younger women who may choose  
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!  
You know you never named his name to me:  
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,  
Not up now, even to you!

*Constance.* Then calm yourself.

*Queen.* See, I am old—look here, you happy girl!  
I will not play the fool, deceive—ah, whom?

'Tis all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek  
 And what a contrast does the moon behold!  
 But then I set my life upon one chance,  
 The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,  
 My soul, myself? All women love great men  
 If young or old; it is in all the tales:  
 Young beauties love old poets who can love—  
 Why should not he, the poems in my soul,  
 The passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice,  
 Life-long, death-long? I throw them at his feet.  
 Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,  
 Whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's  
 That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?  
 You could not praise indeed the empty conch;  
 But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.  
 How I will love him! Cannot men love love?  
 Who was a queen and loved a poet once  
 Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!  
 Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.  
 They love so many women in their youth,  
 And even in age they all love whom they please;  
 And yet the best of them confide to friends  
 That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—  
 They spend a day with such and tire the next:  
 They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,  
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,  
 Horrible though it be, that prejudice,  
 Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.  
 They will, they do: and will not, does not—he?

*Constance.* How can he? You are wedded: 'tis a name  
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,  
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled  
 As you believe and I incline to think,  
 Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?

*Queen.* Hear her! There, there now—could she love *like*  
 me?  
 What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?  
 See all it does or could do! so youth loves!  
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do  
 What I will—you, it was not born in! I  
 Will drive these difficulties far and fast .  
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon.

I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve  
 My youth from its enforced calamity,  
 Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,  
 His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

*Constance.* You will do—dare do . . . pause on what  
 you say!

*Queen.* Hear her! I thank you, sweet, for that surprise.  
 You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!  
 I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.  
 I think I have borne enough and long enough,  
 And patiently enough, the world remarks,  
 To have my own way now, unblamed by all.  
 It does so happen (I rejoice for it)  
 This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.  
 There's not a better way of settling claims  
 Than this; God sends the accident express:  
 And were it for my subjects' good, no more,  
 'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,  
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,  
 And bless God simply, or should almost fear  
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.  
 Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!  
 How strong I am! Could Norbert see me now!

*Constance.* Let me consider. It is all too strange.

*Queen.* You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!  
 You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,  
 You will have many lovers, and love one—  
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours:  
 Taller than he is, since yourself are tall.  
 Love him, like me! Give all away to him;  
 Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,  
 Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,  
 And love him simply for his very self.  
 Remember, I (and what am I to you?)  
 Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,  
 Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.

*Constance.* He shall.

*Queen.* You, step inside my inmost heart!  
 Give me your own heart: let us have one heart!  
 I'll come to you for counsel; "this he says,  
 This he does; what should this amount to, pray?  
 Beseech you, change it into current coin!

Is that worth kisses? Shall I please him there?"  
 And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?  
 Your love, according to your beauty's worth,  
 For you shall have some noble love, all gold:  
 Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.  
 —Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,  
 I felt as I must die or be alone  
 Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:  
 Now, I would face the world with my new life,  
 Wear my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,  
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.  
 How soon a smile of God can change the world!  
 How we are made for happiness—how work  
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight!  
 True, I have lost so many years: what then?  
 Many remain: God has been very good.  
 You, stay here! 'Tis as different from dreams,  
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,  
 As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.  
 The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!  
*[She goes out, leaving Constance. Dance-music from within.]*

NORBERT enters.

Norbert. Well? we have but one minute and one word!  
 Constance. I am yours, Norbert!  
 Norbert. Yes, mine.  
 Constance. Not till now!  
 You were mine. Now I give myself to you.  
 Norbert. Constance?  
 Constance. Your own! I know the thriftier way  
 Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.  
 Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole  
 Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,  
 With a new largess still at each despair)  
 And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve  
 Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,  
 My giving and your taking; both our joys  
 Dying together. Is it the wiser way?  
 I choose the simpler; I give all at once.  
 Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!

Use it, abuse it,—anything but think  
 Hereafter, "Had I known she loved me so,  
 And what my means, I might have thriven with it."  
 This is your means. I give you all myself.

*Norbert.* I take you and thank God.

*Constance.* Look on through years!  
 We cannot kiss, a second day like this;  
 Else were this earth no earth.

*Norbert.* With this day's heat  
 We shall go on through years of cold.

*Constance.* So, best!

—I try to see those years—I think I see.  
 You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back  
 And lay all to the first glow—not sit down  
 For ever brooding on a day like this  
 While seeing embers whiten and love die.  
 Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine,  
 Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

*Norbert.* Just so. I take and know you all at once.  
 Your soul is disengaged so easily,  
 Your face is there, I know you; give me time,  
 Let me be proud and think you shall know me.  
 My soul is slower: in a life I roll  
 The minute out whereto you condense yours—  
 The whole slow circle round you I must move,  
 To be just you. I look to a long life  
 To decompose this minute, prove its worth.  
 'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one  
 Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed  
 In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,  
 If it lay ever unproved in your sight,  
 As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide  
 Its coldness, were it cold.

*Constance.* But how prove, how?

*Norbert.* Prove in my life, you ask?

*Constance.* Quick, Norbert—how?

*Norbert.* That's easy told. I count life just a stuff  
 To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.  
 Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.  
 As with the body—he who hurls a lance  
 Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike:  
 So must I seize and task all means to prove

And show this soul of mine, you crown as yours,  
And justify us both.

*Constance.* Could you write books,  
Paint pictures! One sits down in poverty  
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

*Norbert.* And loves one's painting and one's writing, then,  
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,  
And we best as no other than we are.  
We live, and they experiment on life—  
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof  
To overlook the farther. Let us be  
The thing they look at! I might take your face  
And write of it and paint it—to what end?  
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air  
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form  
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life  
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,  
Made for me, not for others in the world,  
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,  
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.  
I come to you; I leave you not, to write  
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens there  
Paint us!

*Constance.* So, best!

*Norbert.* I understand your soul.  
You live, and rightly sympathise with life,  
With action, power, success. This way is straight;  
And time were short beside, to let me change  
The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.  
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,  
Manure their barren lives, and force thence fruit  
First for themselves, and afterward for me  
In the due tithe; the task of some one soul,  
Through ways of work appointed by the world.  
I am not bid create—men see no star  
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—  
But find and bind and bring to bear their wills.  
So I began: to-night sees how I end.  
What if it see, too, power's first outbreak here  
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,  
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?  
What if the people have discerned at length

The dawn of the next nature, novel brain  
 Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,  
 Whose work, they trust, shall find them as novel ways  
 To untried heights which yet he only sees?  
 I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,  
 This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—  
 See how the mass lies passive to my hand  
 Now that my hand is plastic, with you by  
 To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end  
 Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!  
 My will be on this people! then, the strain,  
 The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
 The long uncertain struggle,—the success  
 And consummation of the spirit-work,  
 Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,  
 While rounded fair for human sense to see  
 The Graces in a dance men recognise  
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!  
 So triumph ever shall renew itself;  
 Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,  
 Ever begin . . .

*Constance.*

I ever helping?

*Norbert.*

Thus!

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*]

*Constance.* Hist, madam! So have I performed my part.  
 You see your gratitude's true decency,  
 Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!  
 Begin, to end the sooner! What's a kiss?

*Norbert.* Constance?

*Constance.*

Why, must I teach it you again?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir?  
 What was I saying these ten minutes long?  
 Then I repeat—when some young handsome man  
 Like you has acted out a part like yours,  
 Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,  
 So very far beyond him, as he says—  
 So hopelessly in love that but to speak  
 Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,  
 And makes some insignificant good soul,  
 Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,  
 And very stalking-horse to cover him  
 In following after what he dares not face.



When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)  
When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,  
--May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,  
And overpasses so his wildest dream,  
With glad consent of all, and most of her  
The confidant who brought the same about—  
Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,  
I do hold that the merest gentleman  
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,  
Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you!"  
Forget it, show his back unmannerly:  
But like a liberal heart will rather turn  
And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours;  
Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two lived  
A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:  
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill.  
And though I shall forget her in due time,  
Her use being answered now, as reason bids,  
Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,—  
Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,  
The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,  
And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss."

*Norbert.* Constance, it is a dream—ah, see, you smile!

*Constance.* So, now his part being properly performed,  
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine  
As duly; I do justice in my turn.  
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well;  
He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I  
Who served to prove your soul accessible.  
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place  
When they had wandered else into despair,  
And kept love constant toward its natural aim.  
Enough, my part is played; you stoop half-way  
And meet us royally and spare our fears:  
'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.  
Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised  
By what comes of it. Be you both happy, both!  
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—  
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart  
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth  
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that  
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—

For him,—he knows his own part!

*Norbert.*

Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?  
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child;  
Or did you but accept it? Well—at least  
You lose by it.

*Constance.*

Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!

Restrain him still from speech a little more,  
And make him happier as more confident!  
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!  
Mark, Norbert! Do not shrink now! Here I yield  
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!  
With her go put in practice the great schemes  
You teem with, follow the career else closed—  
Be all you cannot be except by her!  
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake  
Anything—frankly say you love him! Else  
He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in  
His fear than you conceive: I know the man!

*Norbert.* I know the woman somewhat, and confess  
I thought she had jested better: she begins  
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait  
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

*Queen.* Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize  
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,  
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,  
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,  
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)  
—May still be right: I may do well to speak  
And make authentic what appears a dream  
To even myself. For, what she says, is true:  
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just now of love,  
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,  
But justified a warmth felt long before.  
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:  
Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said.  
Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak  
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil:  
But still I had not waited to discern  
Your heart so long, believe me! From the first  
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,  
In absence even of your own words just now

Which hazarded the truth. 'Tis very strange,  
But takes a happy ending—in your love  
Which mine meets: be it so! as you choose me,  
So I choose you.

*Norbert.* And worthily you choose.  
I will not be unworthy your esteem,  
No, madam. I do love you; I will meet  
Your nature, now I know it. This was well:  
I see,—you dare and you are justified:  
But none had ventured such experiment,  
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,  
Less confident of finding such in me.  
I joy that thus you test me ere you grant  
The dearest richest beauteousest and best  
Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.  
So—back again into my part's set words—  
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,  
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,  
Create in me the love our Constance does.  
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—  
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent  
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—  
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.  
I take this lady.

*Constance.* Stay—not hers, the trap—  
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all!  
He is too cunning, madam! it was I,  
I, Norbert, who . . .

*Norbert.* You, was it, Constance? Then,  
But for the grace of this divinest hour  
Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!  
I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:  
She may experiment upon my heart  
And I instruct her too by the result.  
But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long  
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life  
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

*Constance.* Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?  
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

*Norbert.* Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your  
test?

There's not the meanest woman in the world,  
 Not she I least could love in all the world,  
 Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself,  
 I dare insult as you insult me now.  
 Constance, I could say, if it must be said,  
 "Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!"  
 But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,  
 The soul so offered, which I cannot use,  
 And, please you, give it to some playful friend,  
 For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"  
 I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,  
 That two may mock her heart if it succumb?  
 No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,  
 I would not dare insult a woman so,  
 Were she the meanest woman in the world,  
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

*Constance.* Norbert!

*Norbert.* I love once as I live but once.

What case is this to think or talk about?  
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all  
 If such a step as this killed love in me?  
 Your part were done: account to God for it!  
 But mine—could murdered love get up again,  
 And kneel to whom you pleased to designate,  
 And make you mirth? It is too horrible.  
 You did not know this, Constance? now you know  
 That body and soul have each one life, but one:  
 And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

*Constance.* See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus  
 Loved me in earnest . . .

*Norbert.* Ah, no jest holds here!

Where is the laughter in which jests break up,  
 And what this horror that grows palpable?  
 Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?  
 Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?  
 How could I other? Was it not your test,  
 To try me, what my love for Constance meant?  
 Madam, your royal soul itself approves,  
 The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes  
 A beggar,—asks him, what would buy his child?

And then approves the expected laugh of scorn  
 Returned as something noble from the rags.  
 Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?  
 You two glare each at each like panthers now.  
 Constance, the world fades; only you stand there!  
 You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,  
 Sell me—your soul of souls for any price?  
 No—no—'tis easy to believe in you!  
 Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop  
 Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—  
 Though I might curse, I love you. I am love  
 And cannot change: love's self is at your feet.

[*The QUEEN goes out.*]

*Constance.* Feel my heart; let it die against your own!

*Norbert.* Against my own. Explain not; let this be!  
 This is life's height.

*Constance.* Yours, Yours, Yours!

*Norbert.* You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here  
 I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have died  
 Trying to find this place, which we have found.

*Constance.* Found, found!

*Norbert.* Sweet, never fear what she can do!

We are past harm now.

*Constance.* On the breast of God.

I thought of men—as if you were a man.

Tempting him with a crown!

*Norbert.* This must end here:

It is too perfect.

*Constance.* There's the music stopped.

What measured heavy tread? It is one blaze

About me and within me.

*Norbert.* Oh, some death

Will run its sudden finger round this spark

And sever us from the rest!

*Constance.* And so do well.

Now the doors open.

*Norbert.* 'Tis the guard comes.

*Constance.*

Kiss!

(1855.)



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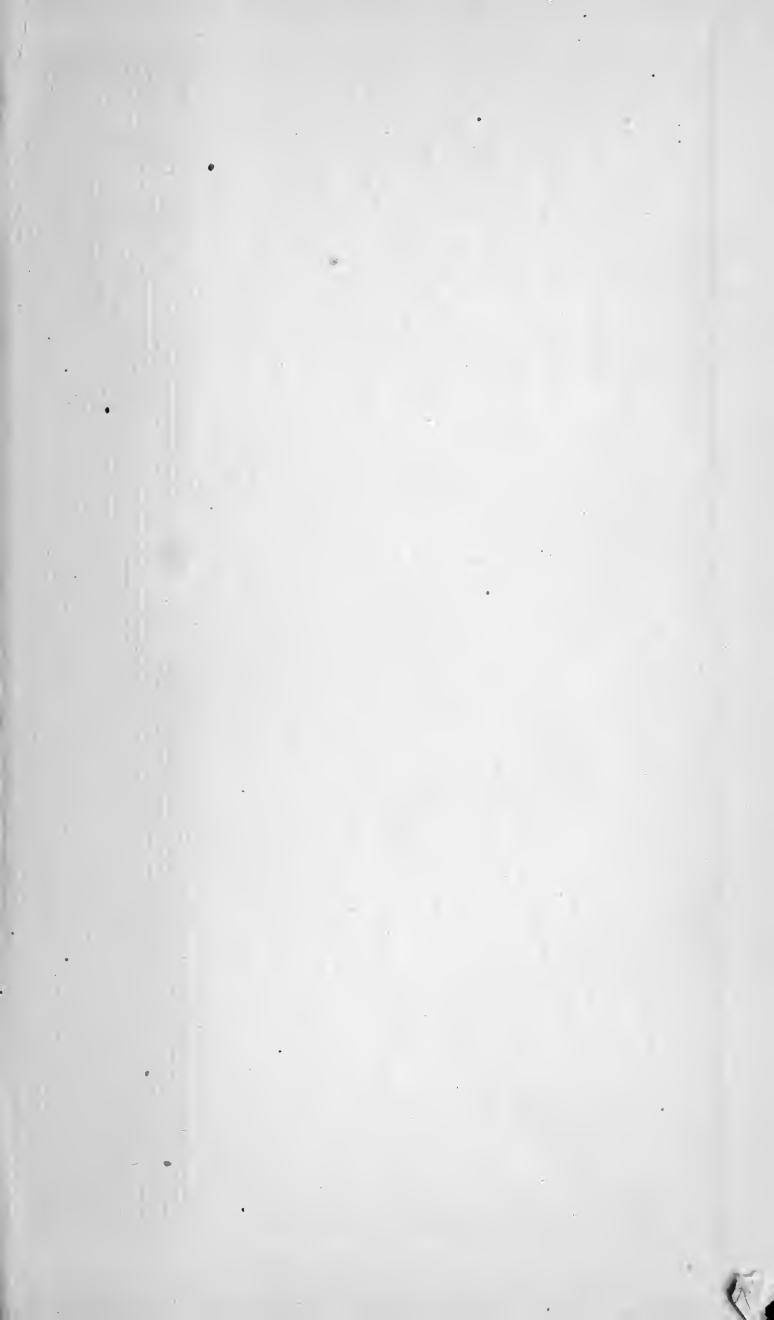


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